

Judge voids law against vibrators

King inspects border post, meets with returning pilgrims

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Wednesday inspected the northern border post of Mudawarah to examine the situation of pilgrims returning from the Hajj in Saudi Arabia. During the visit, King Abdullah stressed the importance of developing border posts and providing them with necessary services to facilitate arrivals and departures. The King, accompanied by HRH Prince Ali and Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti, met with pilgrims for discussions on their views and suggestions. The King also inspected the Aqaba Railway Corporation (ARC), where he held talks with officials on the company's situation. The King, who was briefed by Corporation Director Abdullah Khawaldeh on the ARC's status, called for developing comprehensive solutions for the company's problems.

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NATO expands bombing campaign as Russia announces plan to send ship to Mediterranean

Rugova calls for end to strikes; U.S. warns Serbia may lose Kosovo

Agencies

NATO said on Wednesday it was intensifying its bombing of Yugoslavia, as more terrified Albanians poured out of Kosovo and Serb troops were reported closing in on a huge gathering of refugees inside the province.

The Pentagon on Wednesday said NATO has struck the headquarters of elite Serbian special forces in the heart of Belgrade.

The special unit corps that was hit late Tuesday has been carrying out reconnaissance and other missions in support of the Yugoslav army in Kosovo, said Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon.

Russia alarmed the United States on Wednesday when it said it was sending a reconnaissance ship to the Mediterranean to monitor the Kosovo crisis and could dispatch up to six other navy vessels.

The announcement followed a fresh torrent of Russian criticism of NATO air strikes on Yugoslavia after Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov returned empty-handed from a peace mission to Belgrade.

"We are planning to send a reconnaissance ship to the Mediterranean," Defence Minister Igor Sergeev, who accompanied Primakov to Belgrade on Tuesday, told a joint news conference with Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov.

He said the ship would leave on Friday and added: "The possibility of moving other Russian navy ships to the conflict zone is being considered but as of today no decision has been taken."

The defence ministry was "looking at more decisive means that could be recommended to the Russian leadership if the situation changes," he said, but gave no details.

State Department spokesman James Rubin said in Washington the United States was concerned by the Russian plans.

"While the Russian foreign ministry has made it quite clear that Russia does not intend to become entangled in the conflict in the Balkans, the deployment of these ships we don't see as a particularly helpful gesture," Rubin said.

The Alliance ruled out any Easter pause in the air raids, with alliance General Klaus Naumann insisting it would be "deeply inhumane" to give President Slobodan Milosevic a free hand to continue his offensive in Kosovo.

Meanwhile, the Clinton administration, seeking to raise the cost to Yugoslavia for its scorched-earth torching of Kosovo, says Milosevic risks losing international support for his claim to the Serb province.

White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said Wednesday there has not been a shift in U.S. policy that Kosovo should be an



Russian navy sailors make preparations in Sevastopol, Ukraine, on Wednesday, two days before Russia sends a warship to the Mediterranean in response to NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia (AP photo)

autonomous region. But, he indicated that if Milosevic persists in his campaign of ethnic cleansing, Serbia could lose the province.

Eventually, Lockhart said, Kosovo "would become so radicalised that that might prove impossible to keep as is. And also, the international

community's support for keeping Kosovo as part of Serbia would be eroded."

Lockhart was echoing a warning by Clinton on Tuesday that international support for Serbia's claim on the region could be jeopardised.

Clinton has said from the start of the NATO campaign on

March 24 that it would impose a heavy toll on Milosevic's means to wage war.

On Tuesday, he said that if Milosevic persists for long, "we will see that his military will be seriously diminished, key 'military' infrastructure destroyed, the prospect for international support for Ser-

bia's claim to Kosovo increasingly jeopardised."

The Vatican said Pope John Paul would send his foreign minister, Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, to Belgrade on Thursday with a message for Milosevic.

(Continued on page 7)

Government set for confidence vote on Saturday

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — The newly appointed government of Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, facing the twin challenges of shaping up the economy and improving relations with Arab states, will seek to win a vote of confidence from Parliament on Saturday.

Rawabdeh and several veteran ministers spent most of the five-day Eid Al Adha holiday drafting a "realistic policy statement" which will be submitted to the Lower House on Saturday.

A House source said a several-day debate over the government's statement will start on Tuesday, with most lawmakers expected to take part in the discussion.

"From what we can discern from the government, the statement will be more frank, direct and to the point. Its major concern will be the economic plight of the country," said a deputy, who asked not to be named.

He was referring to the \$6.8 billion foreign debt with an annual debt servicing amounting to \$812 million.

Among the economic challenges Jordan faces are the high unemployment and poverty rates which hamper economic growth in the Kingdom.

Government estimations put the unemployment rate at 16 per cent compared to unofficial estimates of 27 per cent, while many believe that one-third of Jordan's 4.6 million population are living below the poverty line.

The deputy said that during Rawabdeh's meetings with lawmakers over the past two weeks, the premier "informed us that improving Jordan's relations with Arab states tops his agenda."

The deputy added that he does not expect any major change in Jordan's policy towards Israel despite a recent row over Tel Aviv's plan to reduce the Kingdom's share of water coming from Lake Tiberias.

"The peace with Israel is a strategic choice for the Kingdom. I do not think that the premier can change anything in this matter," the deputy said.

Deputies who spoke to the Jordan Times said that Rawabdeh is expected to win between 60 and 65 votes in the 80-

member House, despite recent rows between two ministers and some deputies which angered Parliament blocs in the House.

"These are personal differences which will not affect the number of votes Rawabdeh will manage to win," Deputy Salem Hiyari said.

Hiyari was referring to a row between Interior Minister Nayef Qadi and Deputy Mijhim Sqaor two weeks ago and another spat between Minister of Municipal, Rural, Environmental and Parliamentary Affairs Tawfiq Kreishan and Deputy Khalil Atiyah.

Following these arguments, many deputies vowed that they would withhold confidence in Rawabdeh's government.

"The premier has exerted much effort to contain these problems, and they will not affect his popularity among lawmakers," another deputy said.

Some deputies and observers said Rawabdeh could also face problems from traditionally pro-government deputies, such as former House Speaker Sa'd Hayel Srouf and Faisal Doughmi, both centrist lawmakers who have been highly vocal in their criticism of the premier during recent Parliament sessions.

But one deputy said that Rawabdeh's experience as an elected lawmaker since 1989 has prepared him well.

"The prime minister knows how to deal with deputies and he knows very well how to win their votes," the deputy told the Jordan Times.

In order to rally support for his government, Rawabdeh held meetings with opposition party leaders, including the Muslim Brotherhood movement, which boycotted the 1997 elections.

He also met with the 13 professional union leaders, fierce opponents of the Kingdom's peace treaty with Israel.

During these meetings, Rawabdeh discussed the need to review the controversial Press and Publications Law and the one person, one vote system, introduced by the government of Abdul Salam Majali in 1997.

"Rawabdeh has done his homework for the confidence test," said one deputy commenting on the premier's meetings with the opposition.

Serb warlord Arkan indicted for crimes in Balkans war

THE HAGUE (AFP) — Serbian militia chief Arkan has been indicted as a war criminal, the head of the U.N. war crimes tribunal on Yugoslavia disclosed Wednesday amid reports that he had been spotted in Kosovo.

Arkan, the nom de guerre of Zeljko Raznatovic — was indicted for war crimes during the 1991-1995 conflict in the former Yugoslavia, Louise Arbour, the tribunal's chief prosecutor, told a press conference here.

Arkan, 45, was previously not on the list of identified war crimes suspects compiled by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

although his name has long been rumoured to be on a secret list of indictees.

Some names of suspects have been withheld from public release in order to help efforts to secure their arrest.

"In light of the recent reports of his alleged involvement in Kosovo, I have decided to make public the existence of an indictment against Zeljko Raznatovic, otherwise known as Arkan," Arbour said.

"I have therefore obtained an order from the judge today that the warrant for his arrest made public and attempts are being made now to serve that warrant to the Yugoslav embassy in the Hague."

Arkan is head of a 1,000-

member private army called the Tigers. It is notorious for atrocities that were carried out in Vukovar, Croatia and at Bijeljina, Bosnia at the start of the breakup of the former Yugoslavia.

Arbour did not reveal details of the accusations.

"The [release] order does not apply to the indictment itself, which will remain a sealed document of the tribunal until the accused is arrested," she explained.

Arbour added she was "conscious of the expectations of the international community that all efforts will be made to prevent the commission of war crimes in Kosovo."

Ethnic Albanian groups in

western Europe this week said that Arkan had been spotted in Pristina, the Kosovo capital, and that his forces had been taking part in "ethnic cleansing" of the province.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook on Monday said Arkan and his men had been integrated into the Yugoslav army.

Arkan replied his men "have not yet left for Kosovo... but we will be there very shortly if even one NATO soldier puts his foot on Yugoslav soil."

The former ice cream salesman and ex-bank robber is also wanted by Interpol on other charges.

According to witness testi-

mony, the Tigers swept into villages, raping, looting, provoking terror and carrying out ethnic cleansing.

Sarajevo Television regularly airs library footage of an incident in March 1992 showing Biljana Plavsic — who subsequently became Bosnian Serb president — embracing Arkan in the streets of Bijeljina with Muslim corpses in the background.

Later a member of the Serbian parliament, elected by the hardline Kosovo Serbs, Arkan's marriage to a popular singer of Serbian folk music gave him celebrity status in Serbia.

This was enhanced when last year his football club,

Obilic, reached the qualifying rounds of a European soccer tournament.

He denies all accusations lodged against him by the West.

Arbour added that the Yugoslav embassy in the Netherlands had refused to accept the original of an open letter from the tribunal to the Belgrade government, enlisting Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and other Serbian officials to "denier" any war crimes.

The embassy received a fax of the letter last Friday "but refused on Monday to accept the originals of these letters... I can have no other assurance that my letters have actually reached them," Arbour said.

Muslim Brotherhood members deny reports of internal debate on relations with Hamas

By Saad G. Hattar

AMMAN — The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan is witnessing a growing internal debate as to whether the powerful movement should break off ties with the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, a local weekly newspaper reported on Wednesday.

The Brotherhood's key members, however, denied the report.

The often authoritative Al Majd weekly, citing hardline Islamic sources, said "hawkish and dovish trends" within the Brotherhood have locked horns in a heated debate over the prospects of eventual "disengagement" with Hamas.

The "hawks" said the debate touched off a recent crackdown by the authorities on Brotherhood circles suspected of having affiliations with or sympathies towards Hamas.

The security services have rounded up 15 Brotherhood

members since the beginning of 1999 and questioned them about their alleged links with the Hamas.

But His Majesty Abdullah ordered the release of all suspects prior to the 'Eid Al Adha following a meeting with a Brotherhood delegation led by the movement's overall leader, Abdul Majeed Thneibat.

Having been released by the authorities, the 15 suspects are now facing partisan interrogation by the Brotherhood's leadership, which took up the mission of probing their alleged ties with Hamas, according to the weekly paper.

The Brotherhood leadership set up a "higher interrogation panel," entrusted with punishing members "proven to have links with Hamas," the report said.

The leadership is bound to take "matters into its own hands regarding Hamas," the report said, "as not to sympathise, so as not to anger the authorities," Islamist "hawkish" sources

told the paper.

But the Brotherhood leadership, as well as several active members, denied the existence of such a squabble within the movement's ranks.

"I have never heard of such a debate," said Mohamad Abu Fares, a hardline Brotherhood member and former Islamist deputy. "I was surprised when I read the weekly's report and I don't think it is true. Otherwise, I should have known about it," Abu Fares told the Jordan Times.

Abu Fares, a member of the Shura Council, refuted Al Majd's report regarding an overlap of allegiance between Hamas and the Jordanian Brotherhood.

"It is only natural to be sympathetic with Hamas," he noted. "The Brotherhood should be honoured to have a military wing engaged in efforts to salvage the religious sites from the Jews," Abu Fares added in reference to the Islamic holy sites

in occupied Jerusalem. Abu Fares recalled that the "Hamas charter stipulates that it is the strong and striking wing of the Brotherhood" in Palestine.

Several hardline members echoed Abu Fares' remarks.

The generally pro-establishment Jordanian Brotherhood was formed in the 1950s, as a spin-off to the Cairo-based Islamic flag-ship.

Hamas came to the fore in 1988, just after the intifada had flared in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The group enjoys mainly the support of Jordanian Brotherhood members, especially those who trace their roots to Palestinian origin.

The underground military wing of Hamas, Izzeddine Al Qassam Brigades, has claimed responsibility for numerous violent attacks on Israeli targets inside the Jewish state.

Jordan has never officially acknowledged the presence of Hamas on its soil.

Under intermittent prodding by the Palestine National Authority and Israel, Jordan — which struck a peace treaty with the Jewish state in 1994 — has had to rein in Hamas members here on several occasions.

The Kingdom refers to Hamas' presence here as merely a group of Jordanian nationals involved solely in media spheres.

The reported interrogation panel has incurred the wrath of the "hawkish" wing within the Brotherhood, which is in favour of "continued brotherly relations with Hamas."

This wing accused the Brotherhood leadership of courting the government at the expense of extended links with Hamas, reported Al Majd.

The hawks have launched a campaign within the Brotherhood to muster support against what they termed as "an authoritative group within the Brotherhood leadership."

Record number of parties in Israeli general elections

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli voters will have to choose from a record 33 political parties and six prime ministerial hopefuls when they go to the polls in May, according to the official list of candidates issued Wednesday.

The plethora of political parties — 13 more than contested the previous general elections in 1996 — reflects a splintering of Israeli society and an electoral system which encourages issue-oriented groups to seek a voice in the 120-member Knesset, analysts said.

"Israeli society is increasingly breaking down into distinct sectors and interest groups," said Claude Klein, a political analyst and law professor at Jerusalem's Hebrew University.

Israel's system of proportional representation, in which parties are given seats in parliament according to the percentage of the overall vote their tickets receive, means that any group which can garner 50,000 votes can win a spot in parliament.

"Since there are at least 50,000 dope smokers in Israel, 50,000 pensioners, and 50,000 Jews from this or that country, parties representing these groups can all try their hand in the elections," Klein told AFP.

The trend has been exacerbated since Israel adopted for the 1996 elections a unique system of directly electing its prime minister.

Previously the head of the largest party in the Knesset became premier, discouraging voters who hoped to influence the choice of premier from casting ballots for minor parties.

Now voters can split their ballots, choosing one party leader for prime minister and backing the parliamentary ticket of a smaller group.

When the central election committee closed its registration for the polls at midnight Tuesday, 33 parties were signed up, 20 of them created for this year's race.

Topping the list are mainstream groups led by the One Israel alliance built around the Labour Party of Ehud Barak.

and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing Likud bloc.

They are followed by the new Centre Party headed by former Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and other Likud defectors, the ultra-Orthodox Sephardi party Shas, the far-right National Religious Party and the Russian immigrant group Israel B'Aliya.

But the list also includes fringe groups like the Green Leaf Party which wants to decriminalise marijuana and the Casino Party advocating the legalisation of gambling.

Other lists on the right include the new Herut Party led by former Likud veteran Benny Begin and a second Russian immigrant group, Israel Our Home, headed by Netanyahu's former chief of staff, Avigdor Lieberman.

To the left of One Israel lie Meretz, flag-bearer of the secular, pro-peace cause, and a new workers party, One People, headed by the leader of the powerful Histadrut trade union federation Amir Perez.

Government expected to declare water contingency plan soon

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — Minister of Water and Irrigation Kamel Mahadin said on Wednesday the government is expected to declare its contingency plan early next week to stave off a possible water shortage this summer due to a regional drought.

"The scheme might be announced on Sunday or Monday," Mahadin told the Jordan Times, without giving further details.

High on the programme's list of priorities will be bringing under government control 1,650 privately-

owned wells, rationing water supplies and possibly banning some high-water-consumption crops, according to officials.

After a Cabinet session chaired by His Majesty King Abdullah earlier last month to mainly discuss the water situation, Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh said the plan will be announced on April 1.

King Abdullah has said immediate action must be taken to set up short-and-long-term solutions to develop water resources and ration consumption in

order to help fend off Jordan's chronic water shortage, the most pressing national issue.

Jordan relies mainly on rainwater to meet domestic, agricultural and industrial water needs, which is tapped from surface water sources, such as rivers, and renewable groundwater sources. Rainfall, which dipped to just two per cent of the seasonal average in December and January, accounts for about 60 per cent of Jordan's water supply.

Around 300 million cubic metres (mcm) of water is

used annually for domestic purposes, while industry consumes 50 mcm and agriculture around 650 mcm.

According to the recent available statistics, water levels in the King Talal Dam have dropped from 72mcm to 33.1 mcm. Wadi Arab Dam from 16 mcm to 9.8 mcm. Ziglab Dam from 3.5 mcm to 1.2 mcm. Sha'eb Dam from 1.34 mcm to 341,000 cubic metres, Kafra Dam from 8.5 mcm to 372,000 cubic metres and the desert and Karameh dams are nearly empty.

OIC Societies in Kingdom support NATO attacks against Yugoslavia

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Council of Islamic Organizations and Societies in Jordan on Wednesday sent memoranda to the heads of state of the U.S., Britain, France and Germany, expressing support and appreciation of their efforts to end to what it called Serbian barbaric attacks on the people of Kosovo.

"From the Islamic point of view, we can only congratulate the NATO alliance for coming to the aid of the Kosovo people of Albanian origin who are targeted by the Serbs and their government in a campaign of

genocide," said the memorandum signed by the council's secretary general, Abdul Latif Subeidi.

The memos which were handed to the four countries' envoys in Jordan described the Serbian attacks as "unparalleled in their brutality during the 20th century" and "an outrageous violation of international laws and basic human rights."

"Serbia's genocidal war on the defenceless people of Kosovo is a stigma on the face of all nations which are in a position to help stop the massacre, but fail to do so,"

the memorandum continued. They said the European nations should take prompt action to provide protection to the people of Kosovo before it is too late.

"We call on the world community to come to the aid of the Albanian population of Kosovo, not because they are Muslims but because they are human beings and brothers and sisters of the Christians and the Buddhists and the followers of all other faiths who condemn injustice and barbaric acts against humans," said to the memorandum.

The council's memorandum said NATO operations that aim to liberate the Kosovo population from oppression are noble acts which will be remembered and appreciated by the whole world.

The memorandum followed His Majesty King Abdullah's expression of concern over and condemnation of the reported Serbian actions and ethnic cleansing of the Albanian people of Kosovo.

The King directed the government to send humanitarian and medical assistance to victims.

PNA might reduce customs fees on Jordanian goods

GAZA (Petra) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) is currently studying a Jordanian government request to reduce customs duty on Jordanian trucks transporting goods to the Palestine self-rule areas, according to PNA Minister of Economy and Trade Maher Masri on Wednesday.

The minister, who spoke in Gaza to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said the PNA will shortly conclude an agreement with Israel to expand the list of goods exchanged between

Jordan and the PNA to 1,300 commodities and products which will be transported by trucks.

Masri said the PNA is keen to remove all obstacles and barriers that currently impede the free flow of trade between the two countries in particular and between Palestine and other Arab states including Egypt.

Masri expressed hope that the PNA will take control of the "trade route" on the King Hussein Bridge in April, in accordance with a plan and new arrangements to facilitate the flow

of goods.

To date, the minister said, Israel controls goods exchange procedures at the bridge, and the Israeli authorities were responsible for most delays.

Masri also said the Israelis delay import-export operations between Palestine and Jordan by demanding that Jordanian products respond to Israel's specifications and standards and that the Jordanian goods be unloaded at the bridge for inspection before completing their journey to the Palestinian territory.

Investigator doubts Iraq in Sadr case

GENEVA (R) — A U.N. investigator cast severe doubts on Wednesday on the Iraqi government's assertion it had nothing to do with the recent murder of a Shiite Muslim cleric.

"There are unfortunately many indications that the government is not as innocent as it declares itself to be," former Dutch Foreign Minister Max van der Stoep said.

Van der Stoep was referring to the case of Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Sadeq Al Sadr, gunned down with his two sons in Iraq in February. Iraq has said the attack was a plot carried out by forces try-

ing to break down the unity of the country.

Van der Stoep, the U.N. special rapporteur for human rights in Iraq, said the fact that Sadr was the third leading Shiite cleric killed in Iraq inside a year was highly suspicious.

"We all know that the security apparatus of Iraq functions in a very effective way," he told a news briefing in Geneva, where he was to address the U.N. Human Rights Commission.

"One could imagine that in such a security system, it would be possible that one murder would be committed. But

now we see three murders in one year of leading Shiite clerics in a country where security services dominate the whole of life."

Van der Stoep also noted that Sadr had called for the release of Shiite clerics from prison the week before he died.

There have been recurrent reports of unrest between President Saddam's Sunni-led administration and Shiite Muslims, mostly centred in southern Iraq, where government forces crushed a Shiite rebellion in 1991.

Iraqi opposition figures said Sadr's death had

sparked widespread riots and other disturbances. Iraq has denied there was any unrest and said earlier this month it had captured some of Sadr's killers. It also said it had apprehended some of those responsible when it reported his death on Feb. 20.

The two other ayatollahs killed in Iraq last year were Grand Ayatollah Sheikh Mirza Ali Al Gharawi, shot dead in June, and Ayatollah Sheikh Murtada Al Broujerd, gunned down in April.

Van der Stoep also noted that

assailants had attacked and wounded another senior Shiite cleric, Ayatollah Sheikh Bashir Najafi, in January this year.

Iraq has repeatedly condemned Van der Stoep, who has been special rapporteur for the country since 1991 and whose reports have painted a bleak picture of extreme human rights violations.

Iraq called last week on the Human Rights Commission, which began its annual six-week session in Geneva earlier this month, to remove the Dutchman from his post.

Frenchman travels world to promote Red Cross-Red Crescent ideals

By Dana Charkasi

AMMAN — A 53-year-old Frenchman is touring the world at his own expenses to visit 160 Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies around the world with the aim of spreading the message of peace, dignity, benevolence and humanity.

"My journey is a good opportunity to promote the ideals of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies which include humanity, dignity and benevolence," Gerard Starck told the Jordan Times.

During an official ceremony on Tuesday, Starck

banded the president of the Jordan National Red Crescent Society, Mohammad Al Hadid, a red ribbon symbolising the solidarity between all the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the world. Starck also forwarded a present from

the Red Crescent Society in Kuwait — which was his prior stop — to Hadid as a sign of friendship.

Hadid, on his part, handed Starck a present to forward to the next Red Crescent Society on his journey: Lebanon.

After the official hand-over ceremony, Starck said that meeting people would strengthen the ties between the peoples of the world.

"When you open the newspapers, or when watching television, one has the impression that the world is a whole battlefield. But when you meet people from all kinds of countries personally, like I am doing at the moment, you meet very good, enthusiastic, and hospitable people," he said.

"I think that 98 per cent of the people in the world are very friendly. I think it is possible to have a world



Hadid (left) and Starck (right) (Petra photo)

International Federation but fully financed and organised by Starck himself.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement included Starck's tour around the world in dozens of year 2000 promotional activities and has

committed itself to strengthen humanitarian action in the next Millennium.

"Our mission is to help the vulnerable and victims to preserve their dignity. And this will also be the slogan which we will be carrying into the next Millennium. [Starck's] trip is showing the solidarity within the movement of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. On such an occasion, we would like to show the world that we still care and that we will always care," Mohammad Al Hadid, president of the Jordan National Red Crescent Society told the Jordan Times.

The Red Cross was founded by Swiss humanitarian Jean-Henry Dunant in 1863 after his bad experiences during the Battle of Solferino in 1859 in World War II of Italian Independence. The humanitarian agency cared for victims of battle, and later worked to prevent and relieve of human suffering in gener-

al. The Red Crescent started in Turkey in 1876 after the Crimean War between Russia and Ottoman Turk.

Starck, who said he likes to experience as many challenges as possible, has already worked as a journalist, as the manager of the organisation of Citroen racing cars between 1991 to 1993, has participated in plane races, such as a race between London and Paris in 1983, and has participated in many sailing races of which the most famous was the "America's Cup," one of the largest sailing races in the world.

"We'll see what else the future will bring to me," said Starck enthusiastically. "Jordan is a very beautiful country. Unfortunately, I don't have much time. But I plan to come back to Jordan after I finish my travel around the world."

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes

19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Betes Pas Betes
19:30 News headlines
19:33 Paysages
20:00 World of Museum
20:30 Dr. Quin, the Medicine
Women
21:15 Encounter
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film: Crimes of Fashion — "Sleep Walker"

Friday Programmes

19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Great Moments in Science and Technology
19:30 News headlines
19:33 Serie — Le Paria
20:30 Star Trek
21:15 BBC Single Documentary
22:00 News in English
22:30 Millennium

PRAYER TIMES

04:02 Fajr
05:21 (Sunrise) Doha
11:40 Dhuhr
15:12 Asr
17:58 Maghreb
19:17 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Tel. 4773111-19

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PRAYER TIMES

04:02 Fajr
05:21 (Sunrise) Doha
11:40 Dhuhr
15:12 Asr
17:58 Maghreb
19:17 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox

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Civil Defence Department.....5651111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue.....4630341
Civil Defence Emergency.....199
Rescue Police 192.4621111.....4637777
Fire Brigade.....4617101
Blood Bank.....4771211
Highway Police.....5343402
Traffic police.....4896390
Public Security Dept.....4630321
Hotel Complaints.....5605800
Price Complaints.....5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints.....489467
Amman Municipality Complaints.....4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance).....121
Overseas Calls.....0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs.....4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs.....5661101
Jordan Television.....4773111
Radio Jordan.....4774111
Water Authority.....5680100
J. Electricity Authority.....5815615
Electric Power Co.....4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport.....44-53200

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

AMMAN:
Deserts.....06/20
Jordan Valley.....11/25
Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 19, Aqaba 27.
Humidity readings: Amman
32 per cent, Aqaba 34 per cent.
Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:
Ajloun.....08/16
Jerash.....12/20
Um Qays.....10/21
Madaba.....10/18
Petra.....10/20
Dead Sea.....14/26
AMMAN:
De Abbas Hakim.....4885446
Dr. Arafat Ashbah.....5602507
Dr. Jamal Jharash.....5347351
Dr. Ayman Muhtaseb.....4875748
AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy.....5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy.....5537004
Ruka Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169
IRBID:
Dr. Lutfi Shalabi.....(02)241789
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360
ZARQA:
Dr. Hilal Al Sayyid.....(05)3852902
Palestine Pharmacy.....(05)983562

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery.....5921199
The Islamic, Abdli.....5666131/7
Husseini Medical Centre.....5856856
Luzmin.....4630195
Khalidi Maternity.....464281/6
Aldileh Maternity.....464241/2
Jabal Amman Maternity.....4642362
Malhas J. Amman.....4636140

Palestine, Shmeisani.....5607071
Shmeisani Hospital.....5607431
Jordan Hospital.....5607550
University Hospital.....5353444
Al-Musabir Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali.....5664164/6
Infant, Al-Muhajreen 477101/3
Al-Bashir.....4775111/26
Army, Marka.....4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital.....5157100
Amal Hospital.....5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre.....5353000
Jerusalem Hospital.....4387181

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
08:05 Sanam (RJ)
09:05 Bombay (RJ)
09:05 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:30 New Delhi (RJ)
09:40 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
09:45 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
10:15 Beirut (RJ)
10:30 Colombo (RJ)
13:45 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
15:45 Kuwait (RJ)
16:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
16:30 London (RJ)
17:15 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
18:10 Athens (RJ)
19:15 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
20:20 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
22:45 Kuwait (add) (RJ)
22:50 Larnaca (RJ)
00:45 Paris (RJ)
01:00 Jeddah (RJ)
01:15 Jeddah (RJ)
01:45 Jeddah (RJ)

FOR THE TRAVELLER

Other Flights
13:15 Riyadh (SV)
14:10 Sharjah (AH)
14:45 Doha (QR)
15:55 Dubai (EK)
17:25 Muscat, Dubai (GF)
18:40 Beirut (ME)
19:05 Paris (AF)

department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:00 Beirut (RJ)
08:45 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
11:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
11:00 Aqaba, Paris (RJ)
11:15 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:20 Shannon, Chicago (RJ)
12:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
12:00 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
12:15 Kuwait (RJ)
12:20 Athens (RJ)
15:15 London (RJ)
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Time runs out for illegal labourers today

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — The grace period granted to foreign labourers to legalise their status in the Kingdom expires today amid official complaints concerning the lack of cooperation among the government agencies in cracking down on violators.

The Public Security Department (PSD) on Wednesday said foreigners, as of Thursday, will have to report their place of residence to police when they enter the country or, if foreigners have been in the country for some time, they should report their place of residence to the nearest police station immediately.

According to the new regulations of the residency law, foreigners who enter the country have to complete an entry form which includes their name, nationality, place of birth, passport number, place and date of passport issue, their address and the purpose of their visit.

The two-part form will be kept at the point of entry while the other will be attached to the passport.

According to the new reg-

ulations, landlords must inform the police of the identity of foreign tenants in less than 48 hours. Owners of furnished apartments must inform police in less than 24 hours. They must also immediately inform the police as soon as the tenant leaves the rented place.

A labour ministry official argued that the key factor in controlling the labour market in the Kingdom lies in cooperation among government departments.

"Cooperation between different parties in organising the local labour market is almost nonexistent," said Bahjat Quteishat, head of the labour ministry's employment department.

The Ministry of Labour checks on foreigners working in factories, private companies and institutions, while the Ministry of Interior is responsible for guest workers who have menial jobs in the construction and services sector and who work as general handymen. The Amman Municipality is concerned with foreigners working as street vendors and in private shops.

"The campaign is ongoing and whoever is caught without a working permit is

immediately deported," said Saleh Tarawneh, secretary general of the Ministry of Labour.

In its drive to organise the labour market, former Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh, who also headed the National Task Force on Unemployment, gave foreign workers a March 31 deadline to rectify their legal status. Any violator who is caught after April 1 will be immediately deported at the expense of his employer.

But even the government doubts that unemployment can be solved by the expulsion of foreign workers.

"Unemployment in Jordan cannot be solved only through expelling foreign workers, but by increasing investment inside the country," said Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh during a courtesy visit to the 1 million-member Jordan Federation of Trade Unions.

Rawabdeh's three-week-old government faces mounting challenges, including dire economic problems and the arduous unemployment, officially estimated at 16 per cent and independently at 27 per cent, one of the highest in the world.

His Majesty King Abdullah has asked the premier to combat unemployment, poverty, nepotism and to trim the bloated bureaucracy that many regard as the main stumbling block to attracting local and foreign investment.

Unionists placed confidence in Rawabdeh and his government to find permanent solutions to their problems and insisted that replacing foreign workers with Jordanians is key to uprooting joblessness in the country. Others argue that soaring unemployment can only be contained through a long awaited minimum wage law.

Brigadier Adnan Abdullah, head of the Department of Borders and Residency at the PSD told the Jordan Times that since the start of 1999 his department has discovered that nearly 15,000 guest workers were without work permits in Amman, and that 8,573 of them already have been deported from the Kingdom.

According to Ministry of Labour figures, around 165,000 foreigners have rectified their situation.

Health Ministry bans sale of Jordan Valley white cheese

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Health Ishaq Maraga announced Wednesday that his ministry has banned the marketing of white cheese processed by local farmers in the Central Jordan Valley because samples have proved the cheese unfit for human consumption.

The minister was speaking at a meeting of the ministry's food committee who he said extra precaution should be taken in preventing the marketing of the cheese which he said was responsible for malta fever cases in the Kingdom.

The Ministry of Health has tested cheese samples which were proven harmful to humans and causes malta fever which is transmitted to humans through contaminated milk and milk products, according to Maraga.

The Ministry of Health said the contaminated cheese was processed at two processing plants in the Central Jordan Valley and the plant owners were promptly ordered to stop processing the cheese, triggering farmers' protests.

Maraga said the ministry has a responsibility to prevent the marketing of harmful food to the public and is keen to ensure that public safety measures are taken to protect consumers.

He said the Health Ministry in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Greater Amman Municipality are taking extra precautions in controlling the sale of white cheese and in spreading awareness among the public about the situation.

A group of 40 farmers gathered in front of the Health

Ministry in protest against the ministry's ban demanding that the decision be cancelled.

Eid Ayyesh, a livestock breeder and one of the protesters, said farmers had been selling various milk products over the past years without any problem. He said his group was surprised to hear the ministry's ban. He said the Central Jordan Valley farmers together produce between 10 and 15 tonnes of white cheese daily.

Stressing that selling milk products constitutes farmers' main livelihood, Ayyesh called on the minister of health to cancel the ban and impose it only on the sale of cheese which proves to be contaminated.

Meanwhile, a ministry official announced that there were 700 reported cases of malta fever in Jordan during 1998.

He said malta fever is a disease common to man and animals, and generated in the animals including sheep from which the farmers get their milk and process their cheese.

Malta fever, known scientifically as brucellosis, is an infectious disease in man and animals characterised by fever, chills, sweats, weakness, pains and aches which usually terminate within three to six months. Children are more resistant to the disease than adults.

It can cause economic loss to farmers since the disease in cattle can lead to abortion and lowered milk production. There is no known dependable or practical form of drug therapy for animals. Antibiotics are effective in treating humans.

Jordan to deport Chinese nationals — Qadi

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Jordan will deport three Chinese nationals who were arrested last month after entering Jordan on forged Japanese passports, Interior Minister Nayef Qadi announced on Wednesday.

Qadi also said there was no connection between the arrest of the three and the death of a Japanese national who was found dead in a hotel room in downtown Amman on March 25.

The minister also denied that the three Chinese nationals were members of the Red Army, a clandestine Japanese Marxist organiza-

tion. The names of the three, two females and one male, were not immediately available.

Qadi told the Jordan Times that the three planned to travel to Canada using the Japanese passports before their arrest.

"It is an ordinary incident which has no political background. They have confessed that they were Chinese and we will deport them to where they have come from when interrogation is over," Qadi said.

But a source, who asked not to reveal his identity, cast doubts about the nationality of the three persons saying that they

"might be Chinese in race, but not in nationality."

"We allowed some people who know Chinese to talk to the two girls. One of them understood Chinese the other did not. But they definitely are not members of the Red Army," the official said.

"We are not sure that these people are Chinese and we will continue our investigation," the source told the Jordan Times.

Last month, police found the body of Shinichi Katagiri, 60, dead in his hotel room. He was residing in the same hotel as the two girls who claimed that they were Japanese nationals.

Another person, who also claimed that he was a Japanese, was later arrested by police and detained with the two girls.

A Japanese embassy source told the Jordan Times that an autopsy has shown that Katagiri died of a heart attack.

The source, who asked not to be named, described Katagiri as an "ordinary Japanese citizen who is not member of any organisation."

He added that contacts are being made with the family of Katagiri to send him back to his home in Japan. No date was given for that, the source said.

Fourth woman dies in 'crime of honour'

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — Authorities in Aqaba are questioning a 19-year-old man who last week reportedly shot and killed his younger sister for alleged "immoral behaviour," officials said on Wednesday.

Mariam M., 18, was shot five times in the head and chest on Friday, March 26, by her brother in the Sbalaleh suburb. He surrendered to police shortly

after the crime was committed, claiming he shot his sister to cleanse his family's honour, one source said.

According to another source, the victim left her family's house willingly one week prior to the incident and stayed with a man 10 years her senior for two days.

"The victim was detained by the administrative governor for two days, but her father inter-

fered and solved the problem peacefully," the source said.

On the night of the incident, the source maintained, the brother, who works in Amman, returned home and learned from the neighbours about the incidents involving his sister.

"The brother went to his family's house and without saying one word shot and killed his sister, and then turned himself in to police," the source said.

Medical examinations performed on the victim revealed no evidence that she had engaged in sexual intercourse.

Mariam is the fourth female reportedly killed in the Kingdom in the name of family honour since the beginning of the year.

Last year, over 20 women were killed in Jordan for the same reason, according to official records.

Government engages NASA in 'unusual sightings' investigation

By Saad G. Hattar

AMMAN — Authorities are stepping up an investigation into reported sightings of an unidentified flying object in Hummar area in the past two weeks, both times on a Thursday, an official said Wednesday evening.

The official, who asked not to be named, said Jordanian authorities yesterday made an urgent appeal to the U.S. space agency, NASA, to aid the probe.

"We suspect that, if there is to be another sighting, it will occur this weekend, and we are hoping that NASA will arrive in time to assist us in on-the-spot scientific expertise," he said.

Dozens of residents in Hummar area on both March 18 and March 25 phoned police, the CAA, the Ministry of Interior, the Army and the Air force to report sighting of a large object, perhaps the size of a football field, travelling slowly at low altitude over the area. Sightings were recorded over the course of a 60-minute period each time.

Residents and motorists said the object sped away. "It was very odd," said a minister, speaking on condition of anonymity, who was driving through Hummar following a visit to Fuhais. He said he is a firm believer in extraterrestrial life. "Maybe they are seeking a certain destination here in Jordan akin to the Nazca plains in Peru."

Witnesses said that the "spaceship" seemed to carry an encoded message, using the Latin alphabet, on its belly: "live-gay eace-pay ance-chay in-nay eethay" — live gay millennium-may.

"Maybe someone out there is trying to communicate with us or send us some kind of message," said an English teacher and expert in the ancient Pictish language who teaches at a local school.

The government until



Spotted (Photo by Vaclav Skutil)

yesterday denied having heard of reported sightings, but was forced to retract its statements yesterday after the Jordan Times confronted officials with exclusive photos obtained from a Czech journalist.

Vaclav Skutil, 26, a photojournalist visiting Jordan to write a feature on the spice and silk routes, said he had been informed of the sighting by friends in Hummar on March 18, and was by chance in the area the night of the second sighting.

"This is definitely a UFO. I feel it," Skutil told the Jordan Times yesterday. "Perhaps there is something abnormal in the air or soil that is attractive to whatever life directs the object."

Skutil snapped a series of photos last week just before it vanished beyond the horizon. Skutil, the only person known to have captured the object on film, sold his set of 24 photos for JD75,000 per frame. He said that he will stay in Amman to document the investigation and any further sightings, but after that will return to the Czech Republic for early retirement.

A military source who

asked not to be identified said the brass declined comment, fearing that an announcement might encourage people to visit the area.

"An influx of people, and therefore, bodyheat and carbon monoxide emissions, could disrupt an ongoing air-sample collection," she said.

The object is not known to have touched down.

However, gossip still reigns supreme in Amman, and this morsel was kept secret no longer than you can go for your mobile. Scores of curiosity seekers have already flocked to the site in question hoping to witness a third appearance of the "guest."

The Airforce and Meteorology Department did succeed in gauging air temperature and moisture content in the atmosphere above Hummar, which they hope will aid them in identifying the fuel used in the object.

According to NASA, reports of UFO sightings generally increase at this very time of year, and often occur in clusters in certain, limited regions. A high-ranking source confirmed that the government is now in contact with neighbouring governments and defence departments con-

cerning other possible sightings. However, he would not say whether other sightings had occurred in the region.

"We are reluctant to discuss this further so as not to jeopardise any other investigations that might be on going and not to cause alarm in the population of any country," he said.

One Russian-trained meteorologist, who worked earlier with Russia on an extraterrestrial contact project, said: "The clue lies in Thursdays. According to a simple calculation, on the basis of previous visits, this Thursday is most likely to witness a recurrence of the event."

This is not the first time that Jordanians have seen "far out" visitors. Two years ago, subscribers to NETS, then Jordan's only on-line service, reported on the Better Jordan file having witnessed an unusual flying object hovering above the Airport Road. After having been harangued by doubters, a young diplomat, now ambassador to a North American country, joined the debate. He said that he too had seen the object, giving credence to other accounts.

PM and team to submit policy statement Saturday

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh will submit his policy statement to Parliament on Saturday strengthened by the overall favourable impression he appears to have made on political party and professional union leaders last week.

"Although we are not in Parliament, I think many deputies have been positively impressed by the statements made by Rawabdeh [in his recent meetings with associations and parties] and will remember his declarations of goodwill at the time of the voting," said a leftist party leader on Wednesday.

The premier, who was sworn in on March 4, told leaders of the country's 13 professional associations last Wednesday that his government "wants [them] as partners, not enemies."

Analysts and observers agreed that Rawabdeh showed flexibility and understanding in dealing with both professional and political issues raised at the meeting.

He sat for two hours with association leaders at the

Union of Professional Associations Complex, noting down their demands and asking for clarification on many professional questions.

On the thorniest issue of contention between the government and the Islamic-led syndicates — peace with Israel — Rawabdeh said the 1994 Wadi Araba treaty with the Jewish state cannot and must not be abrogated, unless Jordanians are willing to also return the lands that the Kingdom regained with the signing of the accord.

Abrogating the treaty, Rawabdeh argued, "would also play in Israel's favour," as the Jewish state would be completely freed by any international obligations to honour its commitments.

But, although stressing the importance of peace to Jordan, Rawabdeh also made clear that his government "will not force anybody to normalise [ties with Israel]."

"Whoever does not want to normalise, should not, and whoever wants to, is free to do it," he told union leaders.

Anticipating the main

points of Saturday's policy statement, Rawabdeh stressed on administrative reforms and the fight against corruption, defining them "the main challenges of the next stage."

"Difficult decisions must be taken in this regard," he said, without elaborating, and asking for unions' cooperation and constructive criticism.

Rawabdeh unveiled most of his agenda on political and democratic reforms in his meeting last Thursday with the heads of Jordan's 20 political parties.

Assuring leftists, Islamists, and centrists alike that "dialogue" will not remain an empty word during his mandate, Rawabdeh reiterated his previous announcement that he intends to amend the controversial Press and Publications Law.

Party leaders said they were asked by the premier to draft their suggestions to also amend the country's second most controversial piece of legislation: the elections law, which applies the one-person, one-vote system to demographically unequal constituencies which elect dif-

ferent numbers of representatives each, and that retains religious and ethnic minority seats introduced in the mid-1950s.

"I am with you, against this law," Rawabdeh stated. Most political parties and successive governments had been at loggerheads over the one-person, one-vote system since its introduction ahead of the 1993 general elections.

All political parties, including the centrist National Constitutional Party headed by Lower House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali, unified ranks against the law after the November 1997 elections, beld amidst widespread allegations of unfairness and irregularities. Only five political party members sit in the current 80-member Lower House, a situation that politicians say is due to both the opposition's boycott of the last elections in protest against peace with Israel, and the elections and press laws, as well as to the electoral system, accused of favouring tribalism at the expense of political party culture.

News in brief

King congratulates Iran

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Wednesday sent congratulatory cables to Iranian President, Mohammad Khatami and the supreme spiritual leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on the occasion of Iran's national day. King Abdullah wished them continued good health and happiness and the Iranian people further progress and prosperity. Also on Wednesday King Abdullah received cables of congratulations on the occasion of 'Eid Al Adha from Arab and Islamic leaders and high-ranking officials.

Prince Hamzah receives congratulations

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hamzah on Wednesday received congratulatory cables on his 19th birthday from senior officials. Well-wishers expressed congratulations to the Prince and wished him continued good health and happiness. On Tuesday Prince Hamzah received a similar congratulatory cable from Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mir'a al Ai Kaabneh.

New bridge crossing hours

AMMAN (Petra) — As of Friday, April 2, opening hours at the two crossing points in the North Jordan Valley and in Wadi Araba will be from 5:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. from Sunday through Thursday. Public Security Department sources said. The sources said traffic on Friday and Saturday will be from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Japan gives \$6.7 million to strapped UNRWA

AMMAN (J.T.) — Japan has made a special contribution of \$6.7 million for UNRWA's food assistance programme to Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Ambassador of Japan to Jordan Koichi Matsumoto, and UNRWA Commissioner-General Peter Hansen signed the agreement to this effect at a signing ceremony held last week at UNRWA Headquarters in Amman.

The contribution will be used to purchase rice from Japan for distribution to refugee families receiving special hardship assistance, and in the agency's nutritional support programme mainly benefiting mothers and pregnant women.

Japan, a traditional major donor to UNRWA's regular programmes and food assistance, has also been a generous contributor to projects implemented by

the agency in the five fields of operations, including Jordan.

Since 1994, the government of Japan has contributed more than \$5 million in improving physical conditions in refugee camps in Jordan, upgrading equipment and facilities at the Wadi Seer and Amman Training Centres, the construction and furnishing of a school in Baqa'a camp and adding an extension to UNRWA's Amman Headquarters. The construction of a new school at Jabal Ashrafieh in Amman funded by Japan will begin soon.

UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the Palestine Refugees in the Near East, provides education, health, relief and social services for nearly 3.5 million Palestine refugees registered with the agency.

N. Ireland talks resume amid mixed signals

BELFAST (AFP) — Last-ditch talks aimed at rescuing hopes for peace in Northern Ireland continued here Wednesday, with conflicting signals about the chances of breaking the deadlock over IRA disarmament.

The British and Irish premiers, who arrived Monday in Belfast as talks sponsors in a final push for peace, were meeting again with Protestant Unionist leader David Trimble and Roman Catholic Republican leader Gerry Adams.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair's spokesman said there had been "real progress" overnight but hopes that the Irish Republican Army (IRA) would hint at a softer line towards Protestant demands that it begin disarming were dashed.

In its annual statement to commemorate the 1916 uprising against British rule in Ireland, the IRA said the Northern Ireland peace process had the potential to resolve the conflict, if the will existed.

But in the statement, to be published in its political wing Sinn Fein's An

Phoblacht newspaper Thursday, it gave no hint of any commitment to decommission its weapons.

A spokesman for Trimble claimed the talks would be adjourned for a week or a fortnight — strongly denied by both British and Irish officials — because of the continuing deadlock.

He said the IRA statement would be studied closely by Ulster Unionists but on first glance it appeared "less than helpful".

The Ulster Unionists' security spokesman, Ken Maginnis, told AFP: "I don't think that Sinn Fein are yet in a position to move as far as is required." But he did not rule out an eventual deal.

Blair planned to return to London later in the day for his weekly appearance in parliament, to give an update of the Kosovo crisis.

He could come back to Belfast afterwards with his Irish counterpart Bertie Ahern, who also needs to address the parliament in Dublin on Wednesday afternoon.

The crisis, brewing for months, threatens to derail the historic peace agree-

ment reached on April 10, 1998, between the pro-British Protestants and pro-United Ireland Catholics after two years of tortuous negotiations.

It hinges on Trimble's demands for a "credible" start to disarmament by the IRA before Sinn Fein can enter the new power-sharing Belfast government, a key aspect of the peace accord.

In an interview Wednesday with the Daily Telegraph, Trimble said the ground was all Sinn Fein's to make up.

"The question is now whether the republican movement has the courage to take advantage of the opportunity that's here. If it doesn't, there's a real danger the opportunity will slip away."

"We can try to help but there's a limit to what we can do."

Sinn Fein chairman Mitchell McLaughlin said his party was "frustrated and disappointed" that they had not got the response they wanted from Trimble's Ulster Unionists.

Sinn Fein refuses any "preconditions" on its government seats, which under



British Prime Minister Tony Blair (left) and Irish counterpart Bertie Ahern (right), accompanied by British Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam, speak during a news conference at Hillsborough Castle, County Down. Both Prime Ministers have put the current talks on hold after spending the last three days meeting the main players in a bid to end the arms impasse and kick start a new power-sharing executive (Reuters photo)

the deal are its for force of its electoral strength. The Easter agreement gave the IRA two years to disarm.

Sources close to the negotiation said Wednesday the British and Irish were working on proposals to put to the parties.

London has set a deadline of Wednesday or Thursday

for a resolution, so as to coincide with the first Good Friday anniversary of last year's peace accord.

If the deadline is missed, it has threatened to start moves to force implementation of the deal, a move which in practice would falter on the lack of support on the ground.

Failure to reach a breakthrough could fatally undermine confidence in the process and prompt armed groups such as the IRA and the pro-British Protestant militias to return to violence.

The British province has already seen two sectarian murders this month.

Europe says ASEAN ties must not be held hostage by Myanmar row

BANGKOK (AFP) — Relations between the European Union and ASEAN should not be held hostage by a bitter row over Myanmar, European officials said here Wednesday, insisting that twice-postponed talks between the two blocs would take place in May.

A compromise allowing Myanmar a "passive" role will ensure a meeting of the Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) goes ahead on May 26-28, German Ambassador to Thailand Hermann Erath told reporters.

"It is very much in our interest and we are very happy the JCC meeting will take place here in May," he said.

"There is agreement among all the EU countries that we should not make cooperation between the EU and ASEAN a hostage of the Myanmar situation," said Erath on behalf of Germany, which currently holds the EU presidency.

He said the EU's had agreed to allow Myanmar to be at the meeting as a "gesture" to further ties with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

"It will be a passive presence — they will be seated but

not allowed to speak."

Two previous meetings of the JCC were cancelled after several European nations critical of Myanmar's human rights record refused to let its officials play a full role.

European sources in Bangkok told AFP last week that the agreement to hold the talks was reached following talks between Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan, ASEAN and European Union officials over the past month.

Erath said the Myanmar junta's recent refusal to give the husband of Aung San Suu Kyi a visa to visit Yangon before his death last weekend had done little to improve frictions ties between Europe and Myanmar.

"It certainly did not help, it saddened us. This treatment confirmed all those who think this is a hopeless stage of affairs," he said.

However, Erath stressed that he believed the EU's ties with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations had not suffered lasting damage during the two-year deadlock.

"The cooperation on a political level has not been impaired," he said noting that

official contacts went on below foreign minister level.

"But a lot of things that could have been started did not get off the ground."

Many EU member states accuse Myanmar of human rights violations and condemn its military government for refusing to hand over power to Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, which won a landslide election victory in 1990.

An ASEAN-EU ministerial meeting scheduled for Berlin on Tuesday also fell victim to the row.

ASEAN has insisted that Myanmar, which joined the group in 1997, should not be singled out and the unity of ASEAN must be respected.

Myanmar's entry into ASEAN was strongly opposed by Western nations.

ASEAN counters that its policy of "flexible engagement" with Yangon is more likely to promote change than a policy of confrontation.

Apart from Myanmar, ASEAN includes Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

House of Lords passes bill to end hereditary voting rights

LONDON (AP) — After a marathon debate lasting into the early hours, the House of Lords on Wednesday passed a government bill that will strip aristocrats with inherited seats from voting in the upper house of parliament.

But signalling their reservations, peers voted 192-126 for an amendment saying the bill "radically alters the historic composition of the House of Lords for party political advantage."

Without agreement on its future form "and without making it more democratic."

"Although we will not try to wreck the bill ... there are a number of issues on which we will want to discuss and explore possible amendments," said Lord MacKay, deputy leader of the opposition conservatives in the House of Lords.

The vote will not block the bill's passage through parliament. It cleared the House of Commons earlier

this month.

Fulfilling an election promise to modernise the 800-year-old unelected House of Lords, Tony Blair's Labour government announced in January that it would strip so-called hereditary peers — dukes, marquises, earls, viscounts and barons — of their right to vote.

Under the new legislation, nobles will be given the right to vote in national elections and to stand as candidates for the House of Commons without having to renounce their titles, as has been the case until now.

An independent, seven-member committee will oversee the appointment of life peers — those honoured with lifetime titles for their contributions to national life.

A government commission has until Dec. 31 to report back with suggestions for a new type of upper chamber for parliament, possibly partly appointed and partly elect-

ed.

During an emotional debate over two days, some hereditary peers accused the government of trying to railroad the bill through the House of Lords and of not providing enough information about its plans.

But Lord Irvine, who as lord chancellor is Britain's top legal officer, said the government will not be sidetracked "when it has a manifesto commitment so clear and firm, and so strong a popular endorsement for its manifesto."

He said the government's decision to allow 91 hereditary peers to stay on while reforms are completed will allow the rest to "depart with dignity, not querulously, and without rancour." There are 759 hereditary peers, compared with 507 life peers.

The y are overwhelmingly conservative, giving the main opposition party a built-in majority in the lords, although many never attend.

Opposition accuses Taliban of stalling over peace talks

TEHRAN (AFP) — Afghanistan's opposition accused the ruling Taliban militia Wednesday of stalling the resumption of peace talks following a surprise accord between the warring factions two weeks ago.

"We are waiting for the Taliban response to resume negotiations," an opposition spokesman known only as Dr. Abdullah told Tehran radio, adding that the opposition was waiting for a date and a venue outside Afghanistan.

"The Taliban said they would not be ready to resume negotiations until after their internal political meetings," Abdullah added.

The Islamic Taliban militia and its rivals reached a surprise outline accord on power-sharing earlier on May this month at U.N. sponsored talks in Turkmen capital Ashgabad which U.N. officials had said could resume next month in Kabul.

But the official Afghan

media reported Thursday that the Sunni Moslem Taliban was undecided over whether to take part in a second round of peace talks following meetings with U.N. special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi.

Taliban chief Mulla Mohammad Omar is yet to confirm the next round of talks and has accused the opposition of "manipulating" the dialogue, official Radio Shariat reported.

Taliban and opposition representatives in March hammered out an outline power-sharing agreement encompassing a legislature, judiciary and executive, and raising hopes for elusive peace.

But the apparent deadlock in Brahimi's efforts to persuade the warring sides to set a date and venue for the next session has dampened the hopes.

Shiite Muslim Iran does not recognise the Taliban and relations have been tense since militiamen killed eight Iranian diplomats and an Iranian journalist last year.

'Great Lakes conflict threatens wildlife'

NAIROBI (AFP) — Wildlife in central Africa's national parks are at extreme risk from the growing conflict in the Great Lakes region, five leading development and conservation agencies warned here Wednesday.

The African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), CARE, Fauna and Flora International (FFI), International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) warned that war-induced human poverty may lead to increased poaching and destruction of habitat of rare and endangered species such as the mountain gorilla and northern white rhino.

"Insecurity, such as the recent attack on tourists and rangers at Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda, has limited access to many protected natural areas throughout Burundi, (the Democratic Republic of) Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Uganda, with dire consequences for humans and animals alike," the five groups said in joint statement sent to AFP here Wednesday.

"Africa's most precious natural areas are in

extreme peril from the ongoing war and insecurity in the Great Lakes, and for hundreds of thousands of Africans, the imperatives of survival must take precedence over the need to protect rare plants and animals," the statement quoted CARE's East African regional director Jon Mitchell as having warned.

The statement noted that six protected areas in the DRC and Uganda were designated World Heritage Sites by UNESCO, a recognition of their unique value to conservation worldwide.

CARE, IGCP and WWF warned that insecurity in Burundi, the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda had frightened tourists away from the region, cutting off a lucrative source of revenue for both government and local communities.

"Many of these protected areas, such as Bwindi, benefit from 'multiple use' conservation and development programmes, in which communities bordering the park receive support from tourism revenue-sharing schemes and rural development programmes."

In Bwindi, CARE, IGCP, WWF work with the Ugandan Wildlife Authority (UWA) to use tourism fees to provide communities with development assistance in exchange for their support to protect the park. Communities are also allowed limited use of "buffer zones" within the park for non-harmful activities such as bee keeping and harvesting of medicinal plants.

Such programmes contribute substantially to the elimination of poaching and destruction of natural habitat by local people and provide a valuable source of revenue for struggling government wildlife agencies.

"Without the support of the communities there would be no mountain gorilla," IGCP regional coordinator Annette Lanjouw said, adding:

"The fate of these animals depends on the well-being of the people that surround them, and that depends on regional stability and security."

"As protected natural areas are shut down one by one, the plight of the communities bordering these parks becomes even more desperate," WWF's Sylvie Wabbes said, noting: "Rebel groups use these parks to hide and as

military bases, so what incentives do local people have to protect the parks?"

The infrastructure of the DRC's Virunga National Park, home to half of the world's 620 mountain gorillas, has been looted or destroyed, with some park staff losing their weapons to rebel groups.

Also in the DRC, Garamba National Park, home to the world's 25 remaining northern white rhino, researchers and even park rangers have been unable to conduct the most basic monitoring due to insecurity, while in Rwanda, ongoing insecurity has cut off conservation and development groups from the Volcano National Park since 1996.

Rwanda's Akagera National Park has been reduced in size by two-thirds in order to accommodate influxes of refugees and internally displaced people.

"The only way to protect these precious places is to bring some measure of peace to the Great Lakes, because without peace, we are very worried about the future of conservation and its related benefit to the people of central Africa," Wabbes said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Chile should request Pinochet's extradition'

SANTIAGO (AFP) — Chile's courts should request the extradition of former dictator Augusto Pinochet from Britain to face trial here for human rights abuses committed under his watch, Foreign Minister Jose Insulza said. Chile is ready to try Pinochet "with our institutions and the moral legitimacy of the democratic state and the government of Chile," Insulza told reporters Tuesday. "There's a strong argument to be made in saying that Chile has the jurisdiction and ability ... to carry out such a trial," Insulza said. "If to that you add the fact that the torture cases brought up by Spanish judge Baltasar Garzon have been reopened here, the argument is even stronger," Insulza added. Insulza said he would inquire about the state of internal investigations on torture and disappearances in which Pinochet appears to have been involved. Pinochet was arrested in Britain on Oct. 16 at the request of Garzon, who is probing crimes under Pinochet's dictatorship from 1973 to 1990, when more than 3,000 people were killed or disappeared. After months of legal wrangling and protests for and against the arrest, Britain's Law Lords last week dismissed Pinochet's appeal against extradition, ruling he did not have sovereign immunity. But it also threw out 29 of the 32 charges against him because torture abroad was not an offence under British law until Dec. 8, 1988. The Lords allowed the case to proceed on the basis of one specific charge of torture and a general one of conspiracy to torture relating to Pinochet's final 13 months in power.

Farrakhan checks into hospital

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan checked into a Washington area hospital Tuesday for tests in the radiation-oncology department. The Washington Post reported Wednesday. Farrakhan, 65, spent the night at Howard University Hospital, hospital sources told the daily, refusing to comment on Farrakhan's condition. Earlier this month, Farrakhan's personal physician Abdul Alim Muhammad said his client was suffering from a "mysterious virus" that had left him weak, anaemic and in considerable discomfort. Farrakhan was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1991 and has been receiving radiation therapy, including implantation of 238 tiny metallic seeds directly into the cancer-affected areas. The seed treatment proved effective but caused inflammation of the lower colon and resulting pain, spasms, diarrhoea and bleeding, the doctor said. Last December, Farrakhan was infected by a flu virus that raised fears that he might have been poisoned. Muhammad said, adding that tests however did not confirm that this had been the case. Farrakhan enjoys significant support in the black community for his militant group's discipline and his advocacy of black pride and economic independence. He recently, toned down his perceived bigotry and sought, unsuccessfully, to mend fences with the Jewish community.

Congo military sentences 13 to die; Kinshasa professor held

KINSHASA (AFP) — A military tribunal in Democratic Republic of Congo has sentenced 13 people, including a woman, to death for armed robbery, rape and criminal association, the ACP news agency said Wednesday. The 13 were convicted and sentenced by a court martial in Lubumbashi, chief town of the southeastern Katanga province, which also sentenced four other people to jail terms of between 10 years and life for murder and criminal association, the official news agency said. Convictions and sentences by a military court can be appealed only to the head of state, President Laurent Kabila, who seized power in May 1997 and currently faces a major insurgency in the east, where the mineral-rich Katanga province is among rebel targets. In another development, security agents in the capital have detained a law professor at the University of Kinshasa, Felicien Tshibangu Kalala, sources close to him said Wednesday. Tshibangu, who was being held at an unknown location, allegedly made "insulting" comments about the security services during a course and was denounced by students, one of the sources told AFP. His arrest came a few days after he returned to the capital from Lubumbashi, where he had chaired a series of scientific conferences.

Berlin library buys unpublished diaries of Mendelssohn's sister

BERLIN (AFP) — The state library in Berlin, the Staatsbibliothek, has bought the largely unpublished diaries of Fanny Hensel, sister of 19th century composer Felix Mendelssohn, in an auction here, the auctioneers said Wednesday. The library bought the diaries, which comprise some 320 pages, for 120,000 marks (61,360 euros, \$67,000), the JA Stargardt auction house said. The diaries date from 1834 and continue until shortly before Hensel's death in 1847 and contain descriptions of daily events, both large and small, in the Mendelssohn family. Hensel, who was four years her brother's senior, was also a composer and died aged 42 in the same year as Felix. Also featured in the auction was a music album of the Princess Marie von Sayn-Wittgenstein dating from the middle of the last century. The album, which contains 48 handwritten pages by composers such as Hector Berlioz, Franz Liszt, Friedrich Smetana and Richard Wagner, was snapped up by the Goethe and Schiller archive of Weimar, also for 120,000 marks. The highest price reached in the auction was 130,000 marks for a manuscript of six songs for male chorus by Mendelssohn. The buyer was a private collector who paid more than double the estimated value of the manuscript.

Jury seated for trial in talk-show slaying case

PONTIAC, Michigan (AP) — A waitress, a machinist, a retiree and a decorator are among the jury members chosen to hear a \$50 million lawsuit filed against "The Jenny Jones Show" over a guest's shooting death. Opening statements were to begin Wednesday. The suit was filed by the family of Scott Amedure, 32. He was killed three days after taping a 1995 episode of the television talk show in which he revealed he had a crush on a heterosexual friend, Jonathan Schmitz. Schmitz was found guilty of second-degree murder in 1996, but the conviction was overturned last fall due to an error in jury selection. His retrial is pending. Amedure's family contends the show's producers lied to Schmitz about the gender of his admirer, disregarded warnings about the dangers of surprising guests and had no concern about Schmitz's mental state. The suit names the show, distributor Warner Bros. and producer Telepictures Productions. Attorneys for Warner Bros. have said they will present testimony to show Schmitz was never lied to and repeatedly was told his secret admirer might be a man or woman. Lawyers have indicated they also will argue that the show's responsibility ended when the two men walked out of the studio. Jones is listed as a witness in the case, and defence next week. Nine jury members were selected Tuesday. Six will consider a verdict and the other three will be designated alternates at the end of the trial.



Dominic Cacioppo of Sotheby's auction house displays 'Danseuse au repos', circa 1879, by French artist Edgar Degas. The painting goes to auction in June and is expected to fetch in excess of \$8 million (Reuters photo)

Cambodia leader says AIDS threat worse than war

PHNOM PENH (R) — Prime Minister Hun Sen said on Wednesday that Cambodia's AIDS epidemic is killing 22 people a day and is more serious than the country's long civil war.

In a speech concluding a first national conference on AIDS, Hun Sen urged a mass campaign to increase awareness of the disease and called on television and radio stations and newspapers to give their support.

"AIDS is even more serious than war," he said. "In some cases whole families have been wiped out — the father is dead, the mother is dead and later the children

die of AIDS, too." He said even some of his own bodyguards had died of AIDS.

"No one institution or ministry should remain calm concerning the fight against AIDS. Every place should know how to communicate educational messages to the people. This way we can reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS," he said.

Hun Sen also said all those infected with the human immunodeficiency virus or suffering from AIDS remained an important part of society and should join the fight.

U.N. and government

officials at the conference described Cambodia as the Asian country worst affected by AIDS, with 100,000 people a day infected with the HIV virus.

They said more than 180,000 of Cambodia's 11.4 million people were HIV-positive and 15,000 had already died of AIDS.

Hun Sen said it was necessary to find a way to regulate brothels. "If we cannot close the brothels then we have to find a solution to control them," he said.

Cambodia's bustling sex industry has played a major role in the spread of the disease. Officials of the national AIDS authority

estimate 20,000-30,000 men seek sex with prostitutes every day and up to 40 per cent of sex workers are HIV-positive.

They have urged an expansion of pilot projects to promote 100 per cent condom use in brothels, saying these had already demonstrated a dramatic decrease in infection.

Peter Piot, executive director of the U.N. AIDS programme, warned the conference that if action were not taken to stem the tide of infection, costs in Cambodia in 5-10 years in terms of health care and lost production and income could reach \$4 billion.

Second quake hits north India

RUDRAPRAYAG, India (AFP) — A fresh earthquake Wednesday sparked panic in this northern Indian region, still recovering from a killer tremor this week that left more than 100 people dead.

The second quake, measuring 5.0 on the Richter scale, hit the Rudraprayag district of Uttar Pradesh state at 2:32 a.m. (2102 GMT Tuesday), striking fear among the hundreds of people who have been camping in the open since the first tremor on Monday morning.

"People were very panicky," said Naranprasad, a senior officer with the engineer wing of India's paramilitary Border Security Force.

"However, it seems there have been no fresh casualties because most people were already sheltering in the temporary relief camps set up after the first quake," Prasad said.

Shrinagar district magistrate Dharam Singh said

police monitoring teams had been sent to the affected area.

"According to the information we have received so far, some of the houses that developed cracks in the first quake have been badly damaged this time around," Singh said.

Relief teams were already in the area attending to the victims of Monday's quake, but resources are overstretched with electricity and drinking water cut off to many areas.

Monday's quake had a magnitude of 6.8 and flattened several towns and villages, killing 34 people in Rudraprayag and 61 in adjoining Chamoli district. Around a dozen deaths have so far been reported from outlying villages in the region.

In the worst affected district of Chamoli, soldiers, paramilitary forces and Red Cross personnel were still trying Wednesday to bring relief materials to distant areas, which remain cut off

because of massive landslides triggered by the quake.

"The situation is basically under control although our main concern now is setting up an adequate supply of drinking water," said an Indian Red Cross official.

Col. Prakash Tiwari of the local Garhwal Scouts said army jeeps were being dropped into inaccessible villages to coordinate relief operations.

Nearly 1.3 tonnes of emergency food supplies have already been air-dropped in remote areas by army helicopters, and Gautam Kaul, director general of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, said plans were under way to airlift 1,000 tents.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh visited the quake site on Tuesday but got a frosty reception from survivors who said the government was not doing enough to help them.

The central government

has announced compensation of 100,000 rupees (\$2,400) for each family that lost breadwinners.

A relief convoy from the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) arrived in Chamoli from New Delhi around midday, carrying tarpaulins, blankets, kitchen utensils, cooking oil, rice and clothing.

"We have identified a target group of around 2,500 people who are in serious need of help and will be sending another seven or eight loads during the week," said Geoffrey Dennis, head of the IFRC delegation in India.

An unexpected danger facing the survivors of Monday's quake has been the presence of leopards, who were driven down from forested hillsides by repeated rockfalls and landslides.

Residents said several leopards, who have a local reputation as man-eaters, had been spotted not far from the emergency relief camps.

North Korea says it 'might' discuss missile export issue

TOKYO (R) — North Korea on Wednesday said it might agree to discuss halting its export of missiles, but only if it were compensated for the financial loss this would cause.

Referring to talks between Pyongyang and the United States, a foreign ministry spokesman said: "We reclarified our stand that we might discuss the issue of suspending the export of our missiles if the U.S. side wants, provided that it makes a cash compensation for our foreign currency losses to be entailed by our suspension of missile exports."

His remarks came one day after talks in Pyongyang between the two sides failed to yield anything concrete on the issue. The comments were carried by the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), monitored in Tokyo.

U.S. officials said the two parties managed only to agree to meet again at the earliest possible date. In Seoul on Wednesday, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for non-proliferation Robert Einhorn said North Korea had been warned of "very serious consequences" if it test-fired or exported its new long-range missiles.

In earlier talks

Pyongyang demanded that Washington pay it at least \$1 billion annually to suspend its missile exports.

But the reclusive Stalinist nation appeared adamant on the issue of the missiles themselves. "Our consistent stand is that we will never bargain with anyone about our development, production, test and deployment of missiles because this belongs to our sovereignty from A to Z," the spokesman said.

His comments echoed some carried by KCNA earlier on Wednesday, also from a foreign ministry spokesman, criticising U.S. plans to build a

missile shield defence system and accusing the United States of using Pyongyang as an excuse to "touch off a new arms race and cold war".

"No matter how zealously the U.S. may talk about the 'threat' of the DPRK's (North Korea) missiles, it cannot justify its arms buildup," the spokesman said.

This week's missile talks were the fourth since 1996 and the second since last August, when North Korea fired a three-stage Taepo Dong missile that passed over Japan and landed in the Pacific Ocean.

Two die in new Indonesian bloodshed

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesia was racked by fresh violence on Wednesday as two people died in Christian-Muslim fighting and police clashed with students in central Jakarta, witnesses said.

They said two people died when drunken men from rival villages, wielding machetes and homemade spears, clashed in the Kai islands in the bloodied Moluccas province where more than 200 people have died in communal bloodshed this year.

The witnesses told Reuters they had seen two bodies. Police denied any deaths, although they said some people had been injured in a minor clash in the islands on Wednesday.

The deaths coincided with Jakarta's first violent protest in almost a month and news that five people had died in a row between villagers over a plot of land in the eastern island of Flores, about 1,525 km east of Jakarta.

In Jakarta, anti-riot police beat students with rattan batons as they tried to march on the military headquarters.

About 150 students protesting over the shooting of student demonstrators in May rallied in the central Merdeka (freedom) square. The students later dispersed peacefully.

It was the capital's first violent protest since March 4. Jakarta has been largely

free of violence and protests since students halted a campaign of daily rallies in mid-December.

In Flores, five people were killed in a land row that erupted on Friday and was not brought under control until Tuesday, a local journalist told Reuters.

He said the situation was calm but tense on Wednesday.

The sprawling archipelago has been swept by waves of violence as religious, ethnic and social tensions boil over amid the country's worst political and economic crisis in three decades.

At least 176 people have been killed in the Indonesian part of Borneo island in fighting that has

pitted indigenous Malays and Dayaks against migrants from the island of Madura.

Elsewhere, one person was shot and scores of others injured on Tuesday night when about 800 supporters of rival local politicians in Ngawi, East Java, 563 km east of Jakarta.

About 1,000 people clashed with police in the east Java city of Madiun on Tuesday after three members of the Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-Struggle) were arrested following an argument with a supporter of the ruling Golkar Party.

At least two people were injured and two cars and two shops were torched, witnesses said.

Rwandan genocide seen driven by raw politics

PARIS (R) — The slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Rwandans in a 1994 genocide was motivated not by tribal hatred but by a raw desire for political supremacy, according to a new report released on Wednesday.

The key finding of a four-year study by human rights experts, based on hundreds of interviews and thousands of previously unpublished documents, disputes the widely accepted view of the killings as "an explosion of rage... motivated by old tribal hatreds".

It stemmed instead from "a deliberate choice by a modern political elite to incite fear and hatred to keep itself in power," the 900-page study, entitled "Leave None to Tell the Story", found.

The experts said the lesson of Rwanda was that the international community should act to prevent massive human rights abuses, such as those tak-

ing place in Kosovo.

At least half a million people, three-quarters of Rwanda's Tutsi population, died during 13 weeks of killings, the report said. It was prepared by the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH) in Paris and Human Rights Watch in New York.

That toll is well below estimates by others, including U.N. officials who have spoken of up to 800,000 slaughtered.

"This report is characterised by a refusal to oversimplify," FIDH President Patrick Baudoin told a Paris news conference.

Rather than being "possessed by demons", Rwandan Hutus "chose to do evil" in slaughtering Tutsis and moderate Hutus who rejected their agenda, the report found.

"Many expressed pleasure in inflicting horrible suffering on their victims," it added.

"Nothing was spontaneous... The genocide was organised by an enlightened elite who studied in our (European) schools and universities," FIDH official Eric Gillet told reporters.

Minutely detailed official memos reproduced in the study show that soldiers, veterans, police and local administrators methodically encouraged the killings by spreading fear and rumours about the Tutsi population, the experts said.

The organisers also swiftly killed or otherwise punished Hutus reluctant to join in the slaughter, to convince others not to hesitate.

The Hutu authorities gave food, drinks, drugs, military uniforms and small sums of cash to Rwanda's hungry and jobless Hutu young people to encourage them to kill.

Hutu farmers were given fields and encouraged to steal crops and animals

from Tutsis while business owners and local officials were given houses, vehicles, televisions and computers to encourage their support and participation.

The report documents dozens of warnings about the impending killings sent to officials in France, Belgium and the United States and at the U.N. between November 1993 and April 1994.

Yet no one took the necessary steps to prevent the massacres, even though a relatively modest force would have been sufficient to stop them at the start, the report concludes.

U.N. peacekeeping troops were pulled out of Rwanda for their safety rather than ordered into action to prevent the genocide.

While France's later armed intervention, dubbed operation turquoise, saved some lives, it also allowed the massacres to continue, the report found.

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Keep trying

NATO COUNTRIES are absolutely right in rejecting the latest overture for a peaceful resolution to the Kosovo crisis transmitted through Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov as falling too short of the peace package outlined at Rambouillet and Paris and agreed to by the people of Kosovo. Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's offer to scale down his military activities in Kosovo and allow the free return of refugees in return for a halt to NATO military strikes against his country just does not make the grade.

His offer to accept the repatriation of the Kosovars is an admission that they were evicted en masse from their homes, cities and villages by force. So much for Belgrade's claim that the refugees left their country of their own volition. By offering to remove some of his forces from Kosovo, the Serb leader concedes as well that he had sent additional armed forces in recent times to Kosovo, again in violation of the peace process that he feigned to have taken seriously.

NATO made clear right from the outset that what is required of Belgrade is pure and simple: The withdrawal of the Serbian army, police force and thugs from Kosovo, the immediate cessation of ethnic cleansing and genocidal warfare, the facilitation of the repatriation of refugees and the acceptance to grant the Kosovars autonomy. As President Bill Clinton observed in the wake of the failed Primakov mediation efforts, NATO allies are united in their outrage over the Serb's atrocities.

Perhaps what has failed is only the first stage of the Russian prime minister's determined efforts to seek a peaceful settlement to the Kosovo crisis. Primakov deserves praise for trying, albeit unsuccessfully, thus far. Moscow must persevere in its attempts to find a solution. Failing once is no reason to give up.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Rai's Kheirallah Kheirallah said that Europe has practically called for the establishment of a Palestinian state in accordance with the idea that the Middle East needs such a state. U.S. caution seems to be necessary as Europe provides guarantees for Yasser Arafat to enable him to postpone the declaration of the state until after the Israeli elections. Kheirallah said, Europe in fact is trying to fill the gap the U.S. is leaving, because Washington is unable to interfere in Israeli internal affairs out of fear of providing support for Benjamin Netanyahu, he argued. At a time when Europe is encouraging the establishment of a Palestinian state, the U.S. wants to put an end to Netanyahu's increasingly negative policies, said Kheirallah, who added that the Europeans are "politically bombing" the Israeli prime minister and militarily bombing the Serbian president. Time will prove that the Oslo accords will remain stronger than Netanyahu, regardless of what the enemies of peace might do, Kheirallah concluded.

Al Dustour's Jihad Momani said some people thought that Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh was exaggerating when he requested a two-week period to provide evidence of his government's first achievement. Such doubts stem from stereotypes about governments, who make promises that are never realised, added Momani. He argued that willingness to look at the new Press and Publications Law is by itself an achievement of the new government whose leader, unlike previous heads of governments that claimed to be democrats without showing signs of being so, does not at least deny that he is inclined to "dictatorship." Momani, however, argued that Rawabdeh will be forced to become a democrat. He also said that the government's readiness to open a national dialogue, and the general amnesty issued recently are other accomplishments under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah. Momani concluded that Rawabdeh is not a magician, but has proved that governments can accomplish something on the first day of receiving the Letter of Designation if they work hard enough to implement the duties entrusted to them.

The example of Dana

View from Academia



Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

anecdotes to make you feel that the place is as holy as the holiest of places. And this is the way to go.

In other parts of our homeland, we abuse the environment in all kinds of ways: we throw tissues, cigarette butts, diapers, soda cans, pieces of paper, old clothes, motor oil, old furniture, you name it. A stay at Dana is a lesson in cleanliness, tidiness and environmental awareness.

But the workers at Dana stand out in another way. Their efficiency, friendliness, helpfulness, awareness of the needs of visi-

MY FAMILY and I spent the first two days of the 'Eid at Dana. Not at the resthouse, which we stayed at and loved last year, but at the camp site — in the middle of nature per se. The idea of sleeping and living in a tent, the way many of our grandparents slept and lived not long ago has appealed to us over the years, until we finally did it.

This may seem somewhat ironic: we who, in the minds of some, live in a world of deserts, camels and tents experience a couple of days at a tent for the first time in our lives. Well, this is just to show you that many of our conceptions of "the other" are in fact gross misconceptions and that the process of industrialisation, urbanisation and globalisation is not only bringing the peoples of this tiny globe closer (physically but also in terms of patterns of behaviour, modes of living, habits, customs, etc.) but is also dissolving many of our cultural diversities and many of our uniquenesses.

Much can be said about the said two days. The tranquillity and peace of nature, but also the tranquillity and peace of mind. One loves one's fellow human beings

(even if they happen to be city dwellers who are rude and inconsiderate in many of their customs and habits), but one always welcomes a change — a break in the monotonous rhythm of city life.

And there is also the spontaneous education that comes as a result of the observation of the many things to observe, the exploration of the many parts of the reserve, and the experiences of sorts which one cannot but go through. For a couple of days, you become a Wordsworth, a Coleridge, a Keats, a Shelley, a Byron, an Emerson, a Thoreau, a Whitman. You sit and observe, you sit and meditate, you walk at leisure, you climb a mountain, you wake up early and hide in the hope of spotting an animal, you sit in a large, open tent and chat with your friends. You can do a zillion simple, fun things.

Dana is a success story. Three things about it stand out. First, it is a milestone in the history of organising our relationship with the environment. For the most part, our relationship with the land is not built on wise planning, even in its simplest forms. Our urban centres increase horizontally at a mad pace: we build

homes wherever we wish, we erect factories of all sorts wherever we want, and we bulldoze roads through plains and hills wherever we desire. In and around our urban centres we have not been declaring ample spaces off limits for our psychological, aesthetic needs and for the protection of the uniqueness of the landscape itself.

I have lamented in this column more than once the mad urban expansion in the Houran plains and surrounding Irbid. Factories, schools, homes, chicken farms, roads are built constantly in it without respect for either its historic or present importance. Dana is a lesson in organising and planning our relation with the environment and an example of the wisdom of man, much of which we lack these days.

I was, under this environmental umbrella, also impressed with the respect the workers at the Dana reserve have for the place and for the environment. From the clerk who receives, to the tour guide, to the truck driver, to the campsite manager, they are all environmentally conscious. They give you enough explanation, enough history, and enough

tors, all these stand out quite impressively. The employees are all quality people. And where do they come from? From the area itself. They are not imported labour. They are all Jordanians.

Which dispels and destroys the myth that Jordanians are generally not good for the services sector. Not only are they good, but they also excel. They do not smile merely out of a sense of duty only; they do not serve out of a sense of obligation. They do not run to help you or your children because they have been trained to do so. Of course they must have undergone thorough training. But they do all of this because, like all Jordanians of the south, they are hospitable, friendly, generous, and good people. Dana, in this sense, is a happy marriage of the modern concept of training and the inherent good Jordanian qualities.

One could say much more, but I wish to leave it for people to experience Dana for themselves. Dana is good in itself and is a good example of what should be done in many other areas of the country, in similar and different ways.

From Vietnam through Gaza to Kosovo: Lessons about power, values, and identities

View from the Fourth Circle



Rami G. Khouri

use military force in some situations in order ultimately to promote a set of ideological and human values: freedom, capitalism, democracy, equality, and others that they have defined and defended for centuries. This defence of ideological values often finds itself in military warfare with groups of people who define themselves primarily by criteria of blood, ethnic, religious or cultural identities criteria that lend themselves to the emotional appeals of firebrand nationalist demagogues and tribal zealots. The military action that American forces have seen in recent years — Somalia, Iraq, Lebanon, Bosnia, Kosovo, Sudan, Haiti, Afghanistan reflects a peculiarly consistent dichotomy between an American worldview that organises people and societies according to their ideological values, and a very different worldview that organises states and societies according to their blood and cultural identities.

The human suffering in Kosovo is terrible and unacceptable; but the official American view that NATO intervened to stop the human suffering is childish nonsense (for if that were really the case, why has NATO not intervened in, say, Sudan and other places where human suffering is equally severe and localised, and has been endured for many more decades?). The fighting in Kosovo and Serbia challenges us as the Vietnam war did three decades ago to ponder two related questions: how can or should powerful states use their power to promote a better world? And what defines a better world?

The evidence in date from the past week suggests that American-led NATO power unleashed on Serbia has probably made matters much worse for the people of Kosovo, without checking the underlying factor of Serbian nationalism. The evidence from the use of Anglo-American power against Iraq, or Israeli power against Palestinians and Lebanese, is the same: disproportionate use of unilateral military power to achieve a political objective usually fails, if the underlying political problems are not addressed in a rational and fair manner that balances the reality of ideological and human values against the equal reality of cultural and national identities. Americans killing Serbians as a response to Serbians killing Kosovars strikes me and many others around the world as compounding the problem, not resolving it.

MENA comeback?

Developing World



Riad al Khouri

and the private sector, has major programmes in Lebanon, Morocco, the West Bank and Gaza. Egypt, and Jordan. More limited activities are also being conducted in Yemen, Oman, Tunisia and Algeria. USAID is trying to make an impact and promote growth in MENA by focusing its programmes on areas such as promoting the private sector, helping to address critical water issues, and tackling the question of population growth.

Of the total amount of USAID's \$7 billion budget allocated for foreign assistance, some 42 per cent goes to the Middle East. The size of that resource as well as the effort made in focusing it demonstrate commitment to the MENA region, and the lesson has not been lost on the private sector. In partic-

PRICES ARE probably too high these days on stock markets in developed countries, and the collapse of share prices as well as currencies in Russia, and parts of Latin America and East Asia has made a joke out of investing in many emerging markets. Yet, some of the capital that had fled places like Brazil or Indonesia and can't find a home in New York or Frankfurt is flowing into other places. This includes parts of Eastern Europe (though this trend is being dampened by the NATO aggression in the Balkans) as well as the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This is good business and logical economics, as opposed to the somewhat irrational contagion that had gripped Third World stock markets last year and in 1997. When that financial ailment was at its peak, a collapse in Russia threatened a crash in Brazil, and a sharp fall in Thailand's shares and currency meant a similar drop in South Korea. By the end of 1998, however, things had cooled down, with Eastern European markets starting to attract some of the capital that had fled places like Indonesia and Malaysia. It may now be the turn of MENA.

This makes sense. In fact, things happened like that not too long ago when shares in Mexico and other parts of Latin America fell in the mid-90s. During that episode, the

Mr. Clean, technocratic Mexican president turned out to be a crook (surprise, surprise) and went into a hurried exile, leading to collapse in Mexico and contagion among some of its southern neighbours. A bit of the money that was invested in or that was set to go to Latin America then ended up in MENA, with shares in Amman and Cairo, among other Arab stock exchanges, firming up as a result. This same process may now be at work again.

If we exclude such places as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (because of their restrictions on foreign investors), markets like Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Bahrain, Jordan and Lebanon are now places that pop into foreign investors' minds when they think of international diversification. The combined market capitalisation for the stock exchanges in the MENA region is paltry, and it doesn't take much cash to push them up, and this may now happen.

In the markets of MENA today, a tempting combination of reform of financial systems, a tendency for many Arab economies to move in a different cycle from the rest of the world, and some compelling share valuations means that foreign investors are trickling back.

Egypt in particular is once again attracting the attention of international capital. The process has not

been fast or dramatic, but then if it were, you wouldn't find bargains on the Cairo Exchange. Earnings for companies trading there were up 15 per cent in 1998, even as share prices declined by double that rate. So far this year, Egyptian stocks have advanced 12 per cent, and they are still cheap by the standards of today's developed markets. Egypt's projected growth rate for 1999 is not far under five per cent, and economic reforms are continuing, so foreign investors fed up with Wall Street or Mahatir Mubarrad may be returning. One thing about Egypt that reassures many these days is that its economic growth rate can generally overcome the rise in population.

The latter is still formidable, but, unlike Jordan and other places in the region, the Egyptian economic/demographic growth ratio is starting to look more favourable. U.S. companies in particular are today more bullish on Egypt and other parts of MENA than they have been since 1995. Despite the challenges and problems of doing business in MENA, more and more people in the U.S. once again believe that there are opportunities for investment in the region.

This has clearly happened with a little help from Uncle Sam. Today, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), in collaboration with the State Department, other U.S. government agencies

ular, USAID programmes that are supposed to have an impact on economic policy issues continue to try to put in place more liberal rules and regulations governing investment.

This is obviously another reassuring factor for money, American or otherwise, coming into the region from the West.

The bad news is that foreign assistance to the region is bound to have its downside in terms of corruption and fostering a rent-seeking mentality. No matter how careful "AID" in capital letters is, lower "aid" can somehow or other promote bad practices and wrong attitudes in recipient countries. This is unfortunately also true of certain types of foreign investment. The casino mentality that helped ruin some emerging markets in the past couple of years should not be allowed to do the same in MENA (as it has already done from time to time in places like Kuwait, Lebanon, and Israel). Perhaps this is inevitable, and it may be very difficult to attract "good" aid and investment without bringing in some of the "bad" variety. Nevertheless, such problems will have to be scrutinised if MENA is to make an economic comeback that is sustainable.

Fulfilling an indigenous dream Creating Nunavut

TODAY, THE map of Canada will be transformed when the present-day Northwest Territories (NWT) is divided into two. The resulting new territory will be called Nunavut, which means "our land" in Inuktitut, the Inuit language.

Nunavut's lands will take in the central and eastern portions of today's NWT. These are the traditional lands of the Inuit who live in the Canadian North — lands their ancestors inhabited for thousands of years. The population of the new territory will be 85 per cent Inuit.

When the territory of Nunavut comes into being in 1999, it will fulfil a long-time dream for Inuit of the NWT. Even though the Nunavut government will be a public government, Inuit will make up the majority of the population. They will govern a territory of about 2 million square kilometres, one fifth of Canada's total land mass.

The government of Nunavut will enable Inuit to assume their rightful place in Canada's federation and take charge of their own destiny.

The idea of dividing the NWT is not new. In fact, the federal and territorial governments and Inuit of the NWT discussed the possible division for many years.

In 1976, the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) asked the federal government to map out a boundary between the eastern and western regions of the NWT. The ITC represents Inuit across Canada. It wanted the eastern region of the NWT to be the Nunavut Territory because of Inuit land claims in that area.

After years of negotiations, the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement was settled in 1993. It was the largest land claim ever settled in Canadian history. The settlement gives Inuit control of more than 350,000 square kilometres of land, of which 36,000 square kilometres include mineral rights. In addition, the land claim settlement provides Inuit with

more than \$1 billion over 14 years, and guaranteed participation in decisions on land and resource management.

The land claim settlement agreement has a provision to establish Nunavut "as soon as possible." The governments of Canada and the NWT and the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (which represented Nunavut Inuit during the land claim process) agreed to negotiate a political accord.

This accord, signed in 1992, outlined how the government of the Nunavut Territory would operate. And it fixed 1999 as the year the new territory would become a reality. In 1993, the Parliament of Canada passed the legislation enacting both the land claim settlement and the accord to create the territory of Nunavut — which will transform the map of Canada.

When the new Nunavut government takes power on April 1, 1999, it will face many challenges, including creating employment opportunities for a large work force of young people. With the creation of the Nunavut government, residents of the new territory will be able to decide themselves how they want to meet these challenges. The new government will have powers like those of the two existing territorial governments. It will have an elected legislative assembly, a cabinet and a territorial court.

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) is working together with Inuit and the government of the Northwest Territories on preparations for the establishment of the new government. The Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (the former Tungavik Federation of Nunavut), Nunavut Arctic College, the NWT government and DIAND are organising various training programmes to support preparation of Inuit for government and private sector jobs in the new territory. These training programmes focus on management, administration and support services.

Through their new government, Nunavut residents will be in charge of education, health, social services, and many other provincial-type responsibilities. The establishment of the new government will help stimulate the regional economy, not only creating government jobs, but also spin-off jobs in the private sector.

Until April 1, 1999, the Office of the Interim Commissioner (OIC) is responsible for the establishment of an operational government that can function effectively once the new territory comes into being. The duties of the OIC include arrangements for staffing the new government, and ensuring that all needed systems are in place, such as financial management and an administration system for the territorial courts.

The birth of the new territory is expected to attract development corporations in businesses as diverse as shrimp fishing, hotels and construction. There are also possibilities for mining copper, gold, silver, lead, zinc and diamonds.

The tourism industry is also likely to expand, especially as three new national parks will be created inside Nunavut.

After the creation of Nunavut in 1999, the western section of today's NWT will still be known as the Northwest Territories. At present, the NWT has an elected territorial government with powers over education, social services, local government, housing and other programmes.

The division of the present-day NWT gives residents of the western Northwest Territories a chance to rethink their system of government. The government of Canada supports a "made in the North" proposal for a new western NWT government. Until a proposal is approved, the current system of government will remain in operation.

The division of the NWT will bring in an exciting new era for northerners on both sides of the boundary line.

Nunavut Fast Facts

Area — 2 million square kilometres (about one fifth of Canada's land mass).

Population — 85 per cent Inuit out of total population of 25,000.

Capital City — Iqaluit (population 4,500).

Geographic regions — Qikiqtaaluk, Kivalliq (formerly known as Baffin and Keewatin) and Kitikmeot.

Communities — Nunavut has 28 communities of which Iqaluit is the largest.

Parks — Three national parks will be created within Nunavut's borders.



Definitions

Aboriginal peoples: The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian Constitution recognises three groups of aboriginal people — Indians, Métis people and Inuit. These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

Inuit: An aboriginal people in northern Canada, who live above the tree line in the Northwest Territories, and in Northern Quebec and Labrador. The word means "people" in the Inuit language — Inuktitut. The singular of Inuit is Inuk.

Land claims: In 1973, the federal government recognised two broad classes of claims — comprehensive and specific.

Comprehensive claims are based on the recognition that there are continuing aboriginal rights to lands and natural resources. These kinds of claims come up in those parts of Canada where aboriginal title has not previously been dealt with by treaty and other legal means. The claims are called "comprehensive" because of their wide scope. They include such things as land title, fishing and trapping rights and financial compensation.

Specific claims deal with specific grievances that First Nations may have regarding the fulfilment of treaties.

Specific claims also cover grievances relating to the administration of First Nations lands and assets under the Indian Act.

The North: Land in Canada located north of the 60th Parallel. DIAND's responsibilities for land and resources in the Canadian North relate only to the Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

NATO expands bombing campaign as Russia announces plan to send ship to Mediterranean

(Continued from page 1)

The Western alliance said it had destroyed or severely damaged about 30 Yugoslav aircraft. It also said it had hit an airfield, an army garrison, an airborne brigade headquarters and a military police headquarters in Serbia.

A NATO spokesman said Secretary General Javier Solana had authorised the military to "extend the range and tempo of operations to maximise the effectiveness of the campaign." General Sir Charles Guthrie, chief of Britain's defence staff, told a news conference: "The tempo is hotting up."

Serbian forces with tanks and heavy artillery have overrun ethnic Albanian guerrillas trying to defend a valley in central Kosovo where as many as 50,000 refugees are sheltering. Western diplomats in the Balkans told Reuters on Wednesday.

"Serbian attacks on the Pagarusa Valley continue and the problem there is much more acute than yesterday," said one diplomat in frequent contact with the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

"The KLA put up a fight but from what I can gather they were blown away by T-55 tanks. There's nothing between

the civilians sheltering in the valley and the Serbs. There's obviously the potential for a huge tragedy."

The valley, about 50 km southwest of Kosovo's capital Pristina, does not lie near international borders and there is no easy escape route.

The White House suggested, on Wednesday the NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia were an open-ended campaign.

"We have no firm timetable for this," a White House spokesman said. "Either President Milosevic is going to change his calculation or we are going to continually and systematically hit his military and deprive him of the ability to impose his will."

The moderate Kosovo Albanian political leader Ibrahim Rugova told journalists in Pristina on Wednesday that the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia must stop.

"The bombing must stop. Everything must stop," Rugova said, adding that "this must be worked on" and "Belgrade must cooperate" in ending the war.

"Belgrade must commit to a diplomatic path and accept an accord" for peace in the separatist province, and "must accept intermediaries such as [U.S. diplomat Richard] Holbrooke and [Russian Prime

Minister Yevgeny] Primakov."

Rugova also had a message for NATO, that it must also understand: "Not to kill people and help find a solution."

Rugova, who was speaking at his home in Pristina after reports that he was in hiding and his house had been destroyed, described the present situation in Kosovo as "very tragic."

Speculation had been rife in recent days over the fate of the Kosovo Democratic League (KDL) leader. In Bonn on Tuesday, the KDL representative abroad, Hafiz Gajica, said Rugova had been wounded and that his fate was uncertain.

The Kosovo Albanian leader said Serb police had offered to guarantee his security and that he had "accepted."

Yugoslavia's official news agency Tanjug said NATO dropped cluster bombs on the outskirts of Kosovo's second largest city Pec, hitting a residential area inhabited solely by Serbs.

Despite the aerial onslaught, a NATO spokesman said Serb forces were still expelling ethnic Albanian residents from Kosovo and destroying public records and archives.

Refugees arriving in neighbouring Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro told stories of seeing relatives and neighbours

killed in cold blood.

Many said Serb troops had stripped them of identity papers and even car number plates to deprive them of proof they were ever Yugoslav citizens and prevent them returning.

A NATO spokesman said the expulsions amounted to a "modern-day great terror."

"Without international relief assistance, starvation is expected in 10 days to two weeks" in Kosovo, World Food Programme Executive Director Catherine Bertini said in London.

The number of refugees crossing snowy mountains into Albania is nearing 100,000 and the influx shows no sign of letting up, European monitors said. Albania urged the West to move quickly to help them and said another 100,000 might be on the way.

Around 125,000 people have fled Kosovo since NATO bombings began last week, the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR said.

Hundreds arrived at the Macedonian border by train, saying Serb forces had rounded them up at gunpoint and locked them on board without food or water.

In Paris, French President Jacques Chirac urged the European Union to coordinate a huge aid effort.

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said Russia had "reliable information" the United States was considering a plan to let Kosovo break away from Yugoslavia or to divide up the restive province. There was no confirmation from other capitals.

Italy said it would be hard to resurrect the Rambouillet peace plan for Yugoslavia.

French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin insisted that Milosevic must be persuaded "to renounce his power politics and his policy of ethnic cleansing, so that he will be obliged to yield, to come out of this conflict as the loser."

In Washington, U.S. officials said the United States had taken over Yugoslav diplomatic facilities in the United States

because Belgrade had cut diplomatic ties with Washington.

More and more Belgrade Serbs pinned to their clothes mock targets of paper, unimpressed by NATO's insistence that the bombing is aimed only at the Yugoslav military, not civilians.

An independent Belgrade radio station said NATO

bombs near the city had killed eight people, including both soldiers and civilians, and injured 22.

Belgrade says its forces in Kosovo are merely responding to aggression by separatist ethnic Albanian guerrillas and by NATO, which it accuses of violating international law, sponsoring terrorism and seeking to dismember Serbia.

Did you say 'scuzzy'?

By Jean-Claude Elias

ALTHOUGH SEVERAL years have past since its introduction in the world of personal computing the SCSI — pronounced "scuzzy" — interface remains a mystery for some PC users. The acronym stands for Small Computer System Interface. Like the parallel and the serial types, SCSI lets you connect a wide range of peripherals to PCs. Typically, the parallel type is for printers, the serial is often used to attach modems, mice or joysticks, and the EIDE is for hard disks, to name the main ones. Compared to these three, SCSI provides a much faster and wider input-output flow between the PC and the peripheral connected to it. Physically, the interface is a small electronic card that plugs inside the PC with cable connectors to the outside world.

Examples of SCSI devices are scanners, hard disks and removable data storage units like magnetic tapes drives. Because of its speed and reliability, SCSI is the preferred choice of professionals and power users, whenever it is technically possible of course. And though it is a little bit more difficult to set up the first time, the advantages it brings largely offset the difficulty. One SCSI card

allows the connection of up to 7 SCSI peripherals (some can take 15).

It is a rather uncomplicated choice in most cases — with scanners more particularly — when the manufacturer simply delivers the card with the scanner. But when it comes to hard disks, a good knowledge of the industry standards and a close follow-up of what's going on in the field of computing is required, for the specifications are improved, and therefore modified, very often. Just to give an idea of how confusing it can get, there is SCSI-I, SCSI-II, SCSI-III, Wide SCSI, Ultra SCSI, Ultra Wide SCSI, Fast SCSI, and so forth. Naturally each type requires different cables, different connectors, works only with selected devices and can be used in specific, compatible models of computers. Choosing and installing one should be left to a professional.

Although the recent models of hard disks using the EIDE interface have become extremely fast, SCSI types are still faster. PCs used as servers or in high-end multimedia productions are based on SCSI hard disks. At equal capacity, such disks are three to five times more expensive than EIDE

types, not

to mention

the additional

price of

the SCSI

card itself,

which varies

from JD60 to

JD350.

A 6GB hard

disk costs about

JD180 in EIDE

format and

JD650 in

SCSI. As for

EIDE, it doesn't

require any

extra card for

it is built

inside most

computers.

The current

transfer rates

of EIDE are

16 to 33 MB/s

(million

bytes per

second) and

SCSI are 80

to 100 MB/s.

A new type

of EIDE

called Ultra

DMA4, working

at 66

MB/s, has

been announced.

Whether one

needs an EIDE

or a SCSI hard

disk depends

on the software

application one

is using. It

is also a matter

of budget. Most

regular computing,

including Internet

surfing, works

fine with EIDE

drives.

Generally, if

your application

absolutely requires

SCSI or even if

it simply would

work better with

it, the documentation

will tell you

about it. Otherwise

don't lose

sleep over it.

chip talk



For comments, questions or suggestions, Jean-Claude Elias can be reached at jean-claude@nets.com.ju

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Financial markets seen key to Asia recovery

BANGKOK (R) — Asian financial markets must be developed to mobilise the billions of dollars needed to rebuild Asia's shattered economies, economists say.

Papers prepared for a World Bank conference of leading bankers and financial analysts this week argue that domestic demand must be boosted across the region by the injection of vast amounts of capital.

Part of this money is likely to come from government spending, such as the economic stimulus package announced in Thailand this week.

But many of the papers, obtained by Reuters on Wednesday ahead of the conference, argue that much of the capital will have to come from the debt and equity markets, which need to be expanded and made more efficient in order to attract investors.

"The crisis underscores the need for redoubling efforts to develop domestic debt markets," the regional head of Deutsche Bank in India, Javad Shirazi, argues in a paper due to be delivered on Thursday.

He says the underdeveloped debt markets led to excessive reliance on banks and finance companies as

the principal vehicles for term financing before the Asian crisis was triggered by the devaluation of the Thai baht in 1997.

"More developed domestic debt markets would have lowered the risk of maturity mismatch faced by the banks and also would have reduced the probability of sharp and sudden reversals of capital flows," he says.

World Bank analysts Masahiro Kawai, Hongjoo Hahn and Giuseppe Iannini say all five Asian economies struck worst by the Asian crisis — Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Korea and Thailand — need to bolster their financial markets.

"First, it is important to develop financial markets further to mobilise long-term savings for investment in productive corporate activity," they say.

"Second, it is important to deepen the foreign exchange market to enable firms to access foreign currency hedging facilities. Third, it is important to strengthen corporate governance so that corporations can prudently manage their own financial positions," says their paper, to be given on Friday.

Several economists argue

that the equity markets also have a substantial role to play in raising funds for reconstruction.

Calling for "comprehensive efforts" to develop domestic capital markets across Asia, leading Korean economists Yoon Je Cho and Changyong Rhee argue securities markets need to be encouraged to grow and broaden.

"Serious efforts have to be made to expand the equity market in these economies by encouraging collective investment vehicles, including mutual funds and investment and trust business," they say.

Companies working within these markets require more transparency, efficient legal systems and proper accounting standards, according to Dominique Dwor-Frecaut and Mary Hallward-Driemeier of the World Bank and Francis Colaco of Asia-Pacific Management Consultants.

"The institutional framework for corporate governance needs urgent strengthening to improve efficiency of credit allocation and to reduce transaction costs," they argue.

"Greater transparency needs to be ensured in financial transactions," they stressed.

Bahrain has good control over state spending — Moody's

DUBAI (AFP) — Bahrain is maintaining good control over state spending, with low domestic and external debts, U.S. credit rating agency Moody's Investors Service said in a report received here Wednesday.

But low oil prices will increase fiscal pressure on this small Gulf emirate and non-oil revenues will be unable to compensate, the agency warned.

Bahrain has a "generally prudent management of its fiscal accounts and low domestic and external debt levels," with "good control over state expenditures" and occasional support from neighbouring states.

Despite this, pressure may come, in the medium-term, from a continuing "heavy dependence on oil and gas revenues ... and the lackluster performance of non-oil revenues."

Oil and gas make up about 60 per cent of total government revenues and "increases in non-oil revenues will not be able to make up for the continued loss from depressed oil prices and may shrink themselves."

Bahrain is the Gulf's smallest oil producer, with output of just under 38,000 barrels per day (bpd) as well as 140,000 bpd from an offshore field shared with Saudi Arabia.

The government will have

to maintain a budget deficit during 1999-2001 of between five and seven per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), with financing falling "heavily on the domestic banking system and government bond sales."

The emirate's deficit is projected to reach 160 million dinars (\$421 million) in 1999, which would equal about three per cent of estimated GDP for the year.

Political tensions which have led to periodic unrest "could be further aggravated by the economic downturn," Moody's said.

Despite a large banking and finance industry and a growing manufacturing sector, unemployment remains worryingly high with unofficial figures averaging around the 15 per cent mark.

Economic growth of 3.1 per cent in 1997 turned into negative growth of 2.7 per cent last year, according to Western estimates.

Gross domestic product dropped from \$5.3 billion in 1997 to \$5.1 billion in 1998.

Government spending, which has traditionally led economic growth and diversification, has been pruned this year following the collapse of global oil prices to record lows in recent months.

Exchange Rates Wednesday, 31-03-99

CURRENCY	JORDAN DINAR	BAHRAIN Dinar	UAE Dirham	QATAR RYAL	OMAN RYAL	YEMEN RIAL	SAUDI RIAL	EGYPT POUND	US DOLLAR
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.8760	1.8398	1.8398	1.8398	1.8398	1.8398
BAHRAIN Dinar	5.2976	1.0000	0.2211	9.9488	9.7432	9.7432	9.7432	9.7432	9.7432
UAE Dirham	5.1681	0.9793	1.0000	9.7432	9.5096	9.5096	9.5096	9.5096	9.5096
QATAR RYAL	0.5325	0.1005	0.1026	1.0000	0.9791	0.9791	0.9791	0.9791	0.9791
OMAN RYAL	0.5438	0.1027	0.1048	1.0214	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
YEMEN RIAL	5.1427	0.9708	0.9912	9.6576	9.4559	9.4559	9.4559	9.4559	9.4559
SAUDI RIAL	0.4332	0.0818	0.0835	0.8135	0.7965	0.7965	0.7965	0.7965	0.7965
EGYPT POUND	4.8136	0.8086	0.8278	9.0398	8.8958	8.8958	8.8958	8.8958	8.8958
LEBANON LIRA	21.2147	4.0046	0.0891	39.8408	38.0078	38.0078	38.0078	38.0078	38.0078
US DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2898	0.2722	2.5552	2.5371	2.5371	2.5371	2.5371	2.5371
GBRITAIN STERLING	0.8767	0.1655	0.1690	1.6455	1.6211	1.6211	1.6211	1.6211	1.6211
GERMANY MARK	2.5770	0.4954	0.4957	4.8385	4.7383	4.7383	4.7383	4.7383	4.7383
SWITZERLAND FRA	2.1031	0.3870	0.4054	3.9496	3.8670	3.8670	3.8670	3.8670	3.8670
FRANCE FRANC	8.6424	1.6314	1.6658	16.2302	15.8509	15.8509	15.8509	15.8509	15.8509
JAPAN YEN	1.6656	0.3182	0.3249	3.1855	3.0993	3.0993	3.0993	3.0993	3.0993
HOLLAND GUILDER	2.9034	0.5481	0.5596	5.4525	5.3385	5.3385	5.3385	5.3385	5.3385
SWEDEN KRONA	11.7110	2.2108	2.2573	21.5931	21.5333	21.5333	21.5333	21.5333	21.5333
ITALY LIRA	25.5113	4.8158	4.9172	47.9058	46.9082	46.9082	46.9082	46.9082	46.9082
BELGIUM FRANC	53.1511	10.0231	10.2457	99.8170	97.7332	97.7332	97.7332	97.7332	97.7332
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	2.3402	0.4229	0.4318	4.2670	4.1191	4.1191	4.1191	4.1191	4.1191
GREEK DRACHMA	4.2918	0.8101	0.8272	8.0599	7.8914	7.8914	7.8914	7.8914	7.8914
CYPRUS POUND	0.7585	0.1432	0.1462	1.4244	1.3946	1.3946	1.3946	1.3946	1.3946
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	18.1290	3.4221	3.4943	34.0459	33.3341	33.3341	33.3341	33.3341	33.3341
CANADA DOLLAR	2.1321	0.4025	0.4109	4.0040	3.9203	3.9203	3.9203	3.9203	3.9203
EURO	1.3170	0.2486	0.2538	2.4732	2.4215	2.4215	2.4215	2.4215	2.4215

CURRENCY	US DOLLAR	GBRITAIN STERLING	GERMANY MARK	SWITZERLAND FRANC	FRANCE FRANC	JAPAN YEN	HOLLAND GUILDER	ITALY LIRA	EURO
US DOLLAR	1.0000	0.6710	0.5481	0.6710	0.6710	0.6710	0.6710	0.6710	0.6710
GBRITAIN STERLING	0.6710	1.0000	0.3402	0.4169	0.4169	0.4169	0.4169	0.4169	0.4169
GERMANY MARK	1.8245	2.9893	1.0000	1.2253	0.2982	1.2253	1.2253	1.2253	1.2253
SWITZERLAND FRANC	1.4890	2.3889	0.8161	1.0000	0.2335	1.4890	1.4890	1.4890	1.4890
FRANCE FRANC	6.1188	9.8874	3.3337	4.1253	1.0000	6.1188	6.1188	6.1188	6.1188
JAPAN YEN	119.3400	182.2567	65.4087	80.1478	19.5038	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
HOLLAND GUILDER	2.0556	3.3116	1.1267	1.3805	0.3359	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
SWEDEN KRONA	8.2914	13.3574	4.5445	5.5884	1.3581	6.9477	6.9477	6.9477	6.9477
ITALY LIRA	18.0620	29.0979	9.8997	12.1303	2.9519	15.1349	15.1349	15.1349	15.1349
BELGIUM FRANC	37.6310	60.6235	20.6254	25.2727	6.1501	31.5326	31.5326	31.5326	31.5326
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	1.5980	2.5551	0.8887	1.0652	0.2592	1.5980	1.5980	1.5980	1.5980
GREEK DRACHMA	3.3096	4.8952	1.6554	2.0407	0.4966	3.3096	3.3096	3.3096	3.3096
CYPRUS POUND	0.5370	0.8691	0.2943	0.3606	0.0878	0.5370	0.5370	0.5370	0.5370
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	12.8353	20.6777	7.0350	8.6201	2.0877	16.7552	16.7552	16.7552	16.7552
CANADA DOLLAR	1.5095	2.4318	0.8273	1.0138	0.2497	1.5095	1.5095	1.5095	1.5095
EURO	0.9364	1.5021	0.5110	0.6282	0.1524	0.7813	0.7813	0.7813	0.7813

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR

CURRENCY	ASK	BID
US DOLLAR	1.8398	1.8398
GBRITAIN STERLING	1.2253	1.2253
GERMANY MARK	4.7383	4.7383
SWITZERLAND FRANC	1.4890	1.4890
FRANCE FRANC	6.1188	6.1188
JAPAN YEN	119.3400	119.3400
HOLLAND GUILDER	2.0556	2.0556
ITALY LIRA	18.0620	18.0620
EURO	0.7813	0.7813

STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST CLOSE	CHANGE
FRANKFURT	DAX	4856.84	4875.92	-19.08
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	12943.21	12638.41	304.80
LONDON	FT-SE 100	6764.12	6754.95	10.17
NEW YORK	DJ INDUS	9913.26	10006.78	-93.52
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	662.56	613.15	49.41
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	711.03	717.88	-6.85
NEW YORK	S&P 500	1300.75	1313.11	-12.36
TOKYO	Nikkei-225	12236.59	12459.12	-222.53
PARIS	CAC 40	4141.38	4152.01	-10.63

India opens doors to 894 more import items

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's government liberalised import laws on Wednesday, opening the door to nearly 900 new foreign products in its trade policy for the next fiscal year, and unveiled steps to boost exports.

The shrinkage was drastic but was in line with expectations given the devastating impact of Asia's financial and economic crisis on this country last year, said business consultant Hank Morris of IRC Ltd.

The figure, the worst since Seoul began keeping records at the end of the Korean war in 1953, followed years of growth of around eight per cent as South Korea enjoyed the fruits of the economic miracle of the 1960s and 70s.

Despite the liberalisation, 667 imports still remain

restricted.

The minister also indicated the government would now permit the import of 414 additional items ranging from handbags to garden umbrellas against a special import licence.

The policy for the fiscal year beginning Thursday is aimed at backing India's commitments to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and other global trade bodies.

India has both quantitative and tariff restrictions on imports.

To meet WTO compliance,

India has agreed to remove all quantitative restrictions on imports by the year 2003. But the United States has urged India to free all import items much earlier by 2002.

India with a 40 per cent peak import tariff is one of the most protectionist economies in the world.

"The time has come to implement the second generation of reforms to make India economically strong," said Hegde. "These would include the withdrawal of quantitative restrictions on imports if we are to integrate with the global economy."

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, APRIL 2, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Looks like a good day to spend money on something you've been wanting for ages. You've probably been saving up. If you pool your resources with another person, you could have it sooner instead of later, which is not a bad idea.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Looks like you're going to do pretty well today, eventually. It's not going to look like that for a while, however. It will initially appear that your every move is blocked. Just stay on course and don't take no for an answer. GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Be careful if you're pushing hard at work today. There could be an accident, and you don't want it to happen to you. Also, watch out for the other people, especially anybody dealing with caustic materials or poisons. You want to move quickly, of course, but don't be hasty or impetuous. Advise your friends to be cautious as well.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) This is a much better day for you in many ways, but there is one little problem, still — an authority figure who seems to enjoy leaning on you. Its exasperating, but actually today it won't be too bad. Looks like this person is in a frivolous mood. Not a good day to ask for more money, though. Not quite that frivolous.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) The desire to stay home in bed will be very strong today, but you probably won't get away with it. You might later wish that you had, however. Looks like a clash with a partner could put you in a blue mood. It can only be temporary, though, since it is Friday.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) Looks like you're under quite a bit of pressure at work, and the pace is quick. Unfortunately, you need to stop and read the manual, but you don't really have the time. Your best bet may be to call someone who already knows instead of trying to figure it out yourself. Do whatever works, even if it's kind of expensive.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You work hard for

your money, and today some of that hard work is going to finally pay off. If you've done a very good job on a recent assignment, you'll be rewarded with not only more money, but also more respect. Hold out for that respect. It's the

South Korea real GDP plunges 5.8%

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea's crisis-ravaged economy shrank 5.8 per cent last year, posting its biggest fall in 45 years, but the recession is over and renewed growth is finally in sight, officials have said.

The dramatic contraction in the real gross domestic product (GDP) contrasted with five per cent growth in 1997, and reflected buckling investment and consumption as well as sluggish exports.

"The shrinkage was drastic but was in line with expectations given the devastating impact of Asia's financial and economic crisis on this country last year," said business consultant Hank Morris of IRC Ltd.

The figure, the worst since Seoul began keeping records at the end of the Korean war in 1953, followed years of growth of around eight per cent as South Korea enjoyed the fruits of the economic miracle of the 1960s and 70s.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Cleaving agent
- Sportscaster
- Recedes
- Eye covetously
- Spanish toilet
- Poet Tassie
- Predecessor of Uncle Sam?
- Brown tint
- Uxoricide
- Flavored liqueur
- Russian sovereign
- Language suffix
- Grille part
- Takes to court
- Mel Gibson film
- Helm dir.
- Abrupt transitions
- Stadium part
- Priest, at times
- Inscription on the cross
- Crownlet
- Go astray
- Saucer's partner
- Cornmeal
- perjury
- Bread choice
- Long, narrow
- Answer to "Shall we?"
- Brandy cocktails
- Host
- Convert heads
- Actor Sharif
- Subject of Caesar
- End-table item
- Festive event
- "Gay"
- Spirited vigor

DOWN

- Booches
- Foldover monster
- Hanging to one side
- Little in Lille
- Exlet
- One of the girls
- Goya painting, "The Naked"
- Make amends
- Breakfast pastry
- First family of Ferrara
- Thai currency
- Unruly kid
- Rational
- Sticky situation
- On the briny
- Hungarian violinist
- Show shock, e.g.
- Suit
- Vacuous
- Colorful tropical fish
- Ruin
- AMA members
- Also-ran
- Georgia school
- Haute, in
- Escargot
- Just (RIP)
- Unlabeled
- Spring holiday
- Impertune
- Coyote State's capital
- Fiery felony
- Gin
- Pollution woe
- Tony Musante's TV series
- Slanted type: abbr.
- Racing org.
- Japanese wrestling
- Fossil fuel
- Ms. Bombback
- Sports sin.
- Buddy
- Alfonso's queen

Peanuts

TELL YOUR FRIENDS THEY CAN'T BUILD A NEST ON MY PITCHER'S MOUND.

WHY DO I ALWAYS FEEL LIKE AN OUTSIDER?

Andy Capp

HE TREATS A REFEREE AS HE WOULD A HOUSE WITHOUT BRING LETTING US KNOW!

Mutt'n'Jeff

BRING A GREAT DOG, MOTHER! WATCH IT GO OUTSIDE AND KNOCK ON THE WINDOW!

NOBODY CAN COME NEAR THE HOUSE WITHOUT BRING LETTING US KNOW!

DOES HE BARK?

NO, HE CRAWLS UNDER THE COUCH!

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen

"I may not agree with you, but I'll defend to the death your right to be a totally misinformed fool."

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

TENKO

FLECT

PLUBAR

MAIRDY

Answer: "TENOR, FLECT, PLUBAR, MAIRDY"

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Phosphate revenues rise by 35.8%

**** THE JORDAN** Phosphate Mines Company said Wednesday its revenues grew by 35.8 per cent last year because of increased sales to markets worldwide. The firm made JD14.8 million (\$20.8 mil-

lion) in 1998, compared with JD10.9 million (\$15.3 million) the year before, according to a company report. The report attributed the increased profit to growing phosphate and fertilizer sales.

Jordan International Trade Centre Company registers loss in 1998

**** THE JORDAN** International Trading Centre Company posted a JD115,000 loss last year although gross profit amounted to JD291,000. Board Chairman Mousa Shehadeh attributed the loss mainly to settlement of doubtful debts and to the sharp drop in the prices of paper in addition to sharp competition and instability in prices.

Shehadeh told the shareholders that total sales amounted to JD2.1 million or an average of JD201,000 per month compared to JD4.87 million during 1997 at an average of JD232,000 per month. He explained that the cost was JD2.06 mil-

lion or 85 per cent of the total sales. During 1997, the cost amounted to JD4.35 million that represented 89 per cent of the sales in that year.

At the end of 1998, the company's assets totalled JD4.9 million of which current assets were JD3.8 million. The general assembly concluded its meeting by approving the amortisation of previous losses, amounting to JD489,000, from the special reserve of "premiums from share issuance." Which had a balance of JD425,000 at the end of 1998 (Al Ra'i + Al Aswaq + Al Dustour + Al Arab Al Yawm).

Middle East Complex for Engineering, Electronics and Heavy Industries Company benefits from selling abroad

**** THE MIDDLE** East Complex for Engineering, Electronics and Heavy Industries Company boosted its sales last year mainly by concentrating on exports and expanding other markets. Board Chairman Usama Khalili told the general assembly. He said Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, Palestine, Algeria, Azerbaijan and Ukraine were among the countries which bought products from the company.

Sales amounted to about JD26.4 million but Khalili highlighted that 42 per cent of the total were sold in outside market noting that the local and regional recession and climate changes have negatively affected the sales of heaters.

According to the annual report, the company posted a JD1.27 million net profit and had a JD44.26 million in total assets of which JD8.5 million were shown as net fixed assets (Al Aswaq + Al Ra'i).

Japanese markets face big risks in new fiscal year

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's feeble financial markets face big risks after a gloomy fiscal year that ended Wednesday with stocks down 4.2 per cent and the economy stuck in recession, analysts said.

Over the past 12 months, the Tokyo Stock Exchange's key Nikkei index dropped 690.58 points, or 4.2 per cent, to close the financial year at 15,836.59 points.

"Going forward I think the

market has probably hit the bottom," said Russell Jones, chief economist at Lehman Brothers, referring to the Nikkei's October 9, 1998 low of 12,787.90.

But for any real improvement, investors would have to see the Bank of Japan (BoJ) "turning on the monetary taps and embarking on a big expansion in monetary supply," he said.

Such a policy would depress the yen but could

enliven stocks, Jones said.

"The risks are still on the downside," he cautioned. "It is an incredibly fragile economy, sentiment among companies and individuals is at rock bottom, people have no faith in Japan's economic model, no faith in the economic miracle that was and no faith in the bureaucrats to do anything about it."

The yen had actually strengthened over the fiscal year, he noted. It was trading at 133.37-40 to the dollar in closing trade on March 31 last year and was now at around 120.

The yen strengthening is indicative of the BoJ not doing enough to ease monetary policy," said Jones, forecasting a policy switch within months to sharply loosen the reins.

Lehman Brothers forecast gross domestic product would contract 1.5 per cent in 1999 and 0.2 per cent in 2000. It expected the yen to trade at 130-35 this calendar year.

Andrew Shipley, economist at Schroders Japan, said the past fiscal year here was tumultuous for global financial markets, with crises in Asia, Russia, Brazil

and hedge fund collapses.

For the future, "my concern would be that structurally nothing has changed in Japan in terms of deteriorating profitability or the passive stance of policymakers to deal with various crises which the economy continues to face," he added. "I would say if anything we will see next year as well further deterioration in Japanese asset values," Shipley said, warning that if any external shock were to strike, the "impact could be quite severe."

For the Nikkei, 16,500 points may be the ceiling for the year, the economist said. "I think we have seen the top, signs are ... that the economy is continuing to deteriorate."

Japan's jobless rate climbed to a record high 4.6 per cent in February, according to figures released the previous day, while industrial output slumped 0.6 per cent and retail sales slid a heavy 2.7 per cent.

Schroders forecast an economic shrinkage of 1.9 per cent this calendar year.

Even the banking sector's much-touted clean-up of bad debts following govern-

ment capital injections in return for preference shares and bonds issued Wednesday was overblown, said Shipley.

"It is not clear that the banks are generating profits at the same rate as bad debts are rising due to deflation," the economist said. "We have had a temporary respite because of the government loan guarantees but certainly ... when bankruptcies again shoot up we will be facing another banking crisis."

Shigeo Mori, director and general manager of the equity department at Universal Securities Co. Ltd., was more bullish, forecasting the Nikkei index at 19,400-19,500 points by September and even 22,000-23,000 in March 2000.

"Japanese companies have begun to take restructuring efforts seriously," he said. "At the same time, the BoJ has supplied a lot of money into cash markets by cutting the overnight call rates to near zero."

Both factors had lured foreign investors, he added, "which will help a rise in the Nikkei."

A.S.E TRADE Wednesday, 31-03-99			
ACCESS 4646868			
Company	Open	Close	Change
BANKS			
ARAB BK	220.000	214.000	-2.73%
NTL BK	1.420	1.420	0.00%
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1.420	1.420	0.00%
THE HOUSING BK	2.880	2.880	+1.05%
JO. GULF BK	0.650	0.650	0.00%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.670	1.680	+0.60%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.520	0.520	0.00%
BANKS INDEX	280.660	POINT =	-1.98%
INSURANCE			
JO. FRENCH INS	2.450	2.490	+1.63%
INSURANCE INDEX	124.650	POINT =	+0.20%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1.650	1.650	0.00%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.980	0.980	+1.02%
JO. INTL. TRADING CENT	0.240	0.280	+4.17%
AL-RAT	7.150	7.150	0.00%
COMMODORE	1.070	1.080	+0.93%
ARAB INTL. FOR INVS. & ED	1.830	1.830	0.00%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.050	1.050	0.00%
SERVICES INDEX	111.680	POINT =	-0.01%
INDUSTRY			
CEMENT	3.640	3.680	+0.55%
PHOSPHATE	2.380	2.380	+0.42%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	11.000	11.000	0.00%
JO. TANNING	5.500	5.500	0.00%
THE IND. COMML. AGRICU	1.000	1.030	+3.00%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	3.080	3.100	+0.32%
CERAMIC IND	1.250	1.220	-2.40%
JO. DAIRY	2.960	2.960	0.00%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.550	1.560	+0.65%
NTL STEEL	0.710	0.750	+5.63%
DAR AL DAWA	6.100	6.100	0.00%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.580	0.580	+3.57%
JO. STEEL	1.010	1.010	0.00%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.580	1.700	+7.60%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.380	0.400	+5.26%
PETRO - CHEMICAL	0.230	0.230	0.00%
CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL	1.150	1.150	0.00%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	0.970	0.970	0.00%
GENERAL INVS	3.200	3.050	-4.69%
NTL CABLE	0.510	0.540	+5.88%
SULPHUR - CHEMICALS	0.400	0.390	-2.50%
KAWTHER	0.570	0.580	+1.75%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.570	0.580	+1.75%
IND. RESOURCES	0.470	0.490	+4.26%
NTL ALUMINIUM	0.820	0.830	+1.22%
INDUSTRY INDEX	97.730	POINT =	+0.34%
PARALLEL			
JO. TRADING FACILITIES	0.430	0.440	+2.33%
UNION INVS. CORP	0.800	0.790	-1.25%
ARAB FINANCIAL INVS	0.520	0.500	-3.85%
AL - EKBAL	0.900	0.890	-1.11%
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0.450	0.440	-2.22%
AL DAWLIAH	0.710	0.700	-1.41%
ARAB INVESTORS	1.110	1.110	0.00%
ARAB INTL. TRADE	0.190	0.180	-5.26%
OPTICAL & AUDIAL	0.340	0.340	0.00%
CENTURY	1.180	1.220	+3.39%
NAMICO	0.170	0.180	+5.88%
MIDDLE EAST PHAR	0.620	0.620	0.00%
UNION TOBACCO	4.160	4.250	+2.16%
AL-RAZI	0.540	0.570	+5.56%
INTL CERAMIC	0.360	0.380	+5.56%
NUTRI DAR	0.780	0.770	-1.28%
GRAND INDEX	180.45	POINT =	-1.24%

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 1, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Your partner is sometimes annoying but always supportive. He or she is the one who will help you solve a nagging problem. You know the little voice in the back of your head telling you what to do and how you haven't done it quite right yet? Ask for your partner's coaching to put that little demon to rest.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Your workload isn't heavy, but it is bothersome — a lot of papers to be sorted and filed — and you probably don't want to do it. But take heart. Confusion that has reigned for days, or even weeks, is starting to ease up. By tomorrow you should see your way clear, especially if you get some of these papers out of the way now.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Love is in the air, and it could motivate you to try even harder. Success also looks assured, although you may have to take a couple of steps backwards before you go forward. There appear to be lots of contradictions today, but that's not really true. Actually, it's all part of getting where you're going.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) Travel is a possibility today, but not a very good one. If you do travel, give yourself extra time, because there will most likely be delays. Stay home and make changes to your place instead, if you can.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) You may be anxious to get started on a new project, but don't take off on it quite yet. You need to do a little more homework first. Get a good book on the subject and study, to avoid making a silly mistake.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) Looks like money is coming in today, and lots of work is going out. Oops! You might even have to clean up a mess or two. They're not your fault. It looks like somebody else goofed up, but you're the perfect person to put things right. That's why you get to do it. Take it as a compliment.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You're looking very good today, even better than usual. You're attracting lots of attention, but don't let it turn your head. There's still work that needs to be done, and it needs to be done carefully. One little mistake and you'll have to do the whole job over, so take care.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) By pulling a few strings behind the scenes, you ought to be able to get a loved one something really special. Do it not just to show you can, but also to see the other person smile. That's your real reward.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Something you get today or received recently could make another possession superfluous. In other words, now you've got two of them and you only need one. What's you do with it? Leave it lying around or give it to a friend? The latter is definitely your better option, for reasons that will become apparent later.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) If you are decisive while others waver, you could propel yourself up the ladder to success. Looks like the people above you don't have a clue, and you do. So don't just sit there and be critical. Show them what they're supposed to be doing, and get on with it.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Does more education increase your chance for success? You're obviously intelligent, but do you have the polish, sophistication and advanced degrees you really need? If not, this is an excellent day to put money down on a class you'd love, which would also improve your skills. If you know one, go for it.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You may still be feeling a bit cantankerous. You want more than you can afford, and that's always uncomfortable. The problem today is a lack of focus. You don't have your priorities firmly set yet. Do that first, and tomorrow will be much easier.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

Vivendi to buy U.S. Filter for \$6.2b

NEW YORK (AFP) — French group Vivendi has confirmed here that it plans to buy the leading U.S. water treatment group, United States Filter Corp. for \$6.2 billion.

The tender offer, approved by the boards of directors of both companies at \$31.50 per share of U.S. Filter common stock, is the largest French acquisition ever made in the United States. The transaction is subject to regulatory approval in the United States and by the European Commission.

Once approved, the transaction would nearly double the revenues of Vivendi's water treatment business through its Generale des Eaux subsidiary, the companies said in a joint statement.

U.S. Filter, which is based in Palm Desert, California, is one of the biggest water group in the sector of water treatment. U.S. Filter and Paris-based Generale des Eaux would have combined approximately \$12 billion.

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Raptors complete first winning month in franchise history

CLEVELAND (R) — The surging Toronto Raptors took a big step toward shedding the expansion team stigma on Tuesday by completing the first winning month in franchise history while closing in on a playoff berth.

Dee Brown drained a team-record eight 3-pointers to lead the Raptors to a 101-91 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Brown scored 28 points, making 8-of-14 shots from behind the arc for Toronto, which went 11-6 in March and moved over .500 for just the third time in its four-year history.

"I know I had a lot of threes. I didn't know it was a team record," Brown said. "Every time it came off my hand I thought it was going in."

Doug Christie added 21 points for the 15-14 Raptors, who have won nine of their last 11 games to move into a tie with slumping Philadelphia for the last playoff spot in the East.

In New York, Patrick Ewing scored a season-high 37 points and grabbed 15 rebounds as the Knicks edged the Indiana Pacers 94-93 in a contest that turned ugly.

Latrell Sprewell added 18 points, including a driving layup and a pair of free throws in the final 1:20 that put the Knicks ahead for good.

Ewing got into a scuffle with Pacers swingman Jalen Rose in the second quarter. Rose threw a punch intended for Ewing that caught referee Dick Bavetta in the nose and he was ejected.

At Golden State, Bimbo Coles scored 16 of his season-high 24 points in the fourth quarter as the Warriors stunned the league-leading Portland Trail Blazers 93-90.

Coles hit a running jump shot with 52 seconds remaining to give the Warriors an 84-81 lead and made five free throws in the closing seconds to halt Portland's six-game win streak.

John Starks scored 16 points, including three 3-pointers in the fourth quarter for the Warriors.

In Orlando, Horace Grant hit a 14-footer with 16 seconds left and Darrell Armstrong forced Stephon Marbury to miss a potential tying layup in the final seconds as the eastern conference first-place Magic edged the last-place New Jersey Nets 100-98.

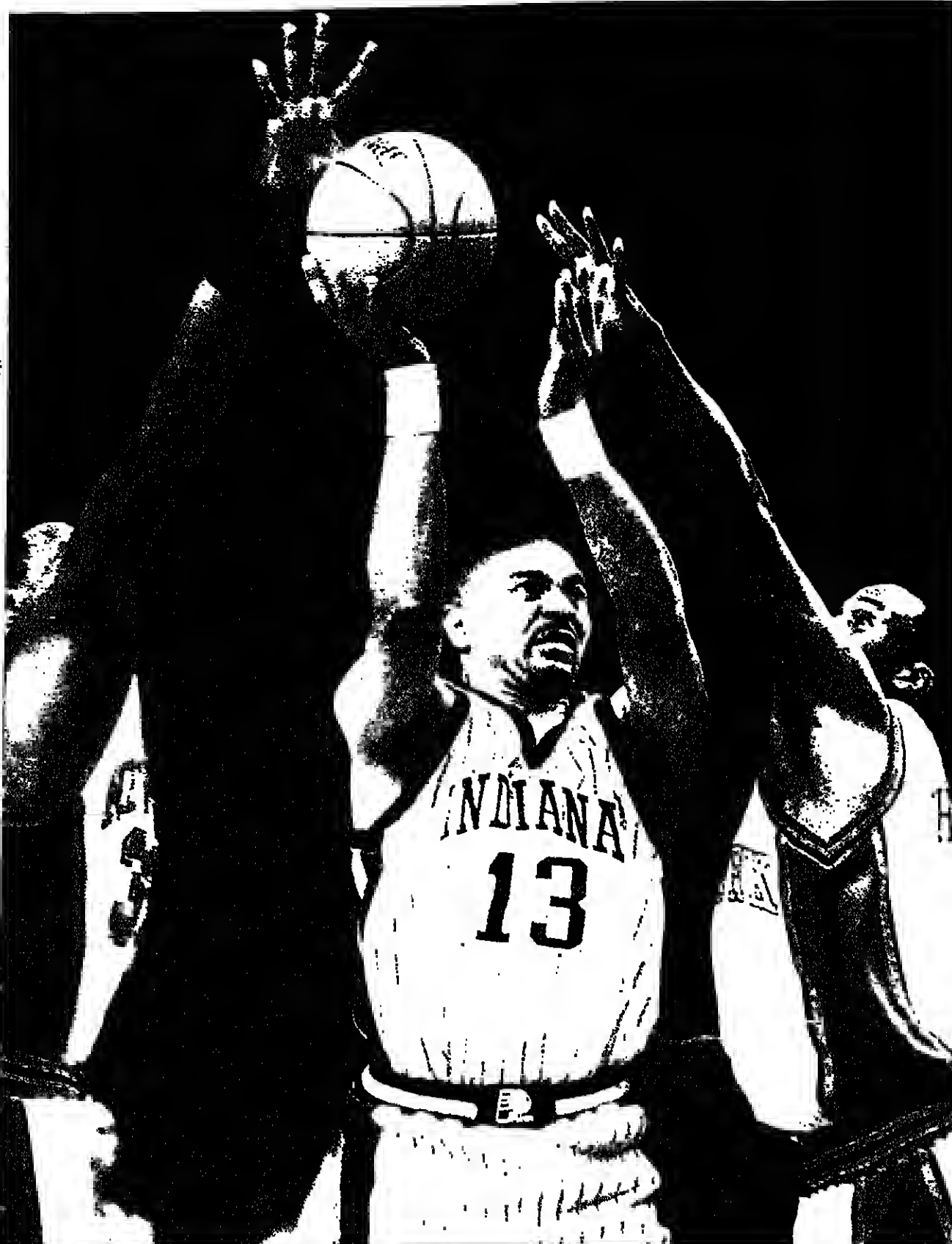
Nick Anderson led the Magic with 28 points.

In Atlanta, Grant Hill scored 28 points, including 10 in a decisive 21-6 fourth-quarter run, as the Detroit Pistons pummeled the Hawks 93-77 for their fourth straight win.

Lindsey Hunter added 21 points for Detroit.

Steve Smith scored 18 points to lead Atlanta, which saw its five-game winning streak halted.

In Charlotte, Kenny Anderson scored 22



Indiana Pacers' Mark Jackson (C) puts a shot up between the New York Knicks' Patrick Ewing (L) and Chris Childs (R) in the first quarter at Madison Square Garden in New York (AFP photo)

points, including a key 3-pointer with 1:34 remaining, to lead the Boston Celtics to a 109-99 victory over the Hornets.

Paul Pierce added 19 points and Antoine Walker 15 for Boston. Elden Campbell scored 17 points to pace the Hornets, who saw their eight-game home winning streak snapped.

In Chicago, Toni Kukoc returned from a hack injury to score 26 points and hand out seven assists in leading the Bulls to a 91-81 victory over the struggling Philadelphia 76ers.

Allen Iverson scored 27 points for the Sixers, who suffered their fifth loss in six games.

At Minnesota, Terrell Brandon scored 16 of his 22 points in a big third quarter and Kevin Garnett collected 22 points, nine rebounds and eight assists to lead Timberwolves to a 98-78 romp past the Dallas Mavericks.

Garnett shot 11-of-12 from the floor and Brandon hit all seven of his shots in the third quarter, when Minnesota built a comfortable 78-55 cushion.

In Milwaukee, Glenn Robinson nailed a 20-foot jumper with 3.1 seconds remaining to lift the Bucks to a 107-105 victory over the Washington Wizards.

Washington had one last chance to win but Calbert Cheaney's 3-point attempt banked off the rim as time expired.

Milwaukee's Ray Allen, who spend Monday night cheering his Alma Mater Connecticut to its first NCAA title, scored 13 of his 25 points in the fourth quarter and handed off to Robinson for the winning bucket.

In San Antonio, Tim Duncan scored 12 of his

26 points in a dominating first quarter and David Robinson added 18 points and 10 rebounds to lead the streaking Spurs to a 95-87 triumph over the Seattle SuperSonics.

Avery Johnson added 14 points for San Antonio, which led 27-14 after the first quarter and never trailed on the way to posting its 14th win in the last 16 games.

In Sacramento, Vernon Maxwell scored 33 points and rookie Predrag Stojakovic added 26 to lead the Kings to a 104-101 overtime upset of the Utah Jazz.

Vlade Divac was 0-for-

9 from the field, but hit all eight of his free throws for Sacramento, including the go-ahead foul shot with 45 seconds left in overtime.

Karl Malone led Utah with 20 points. In Los Angeles, Brent Price scored 14 of his 19 points in the fourth quarter to lead the Houston Rockets to their ninth straight victory, a 104-95 triumph over the Clippers.

Rookie Michael Dickerson also scored 19 points and Charles Barkley pulled down 14 rebounds for the Rockets, who held on after allowing the Clippers to cut a 22-point deficit to five in the fourth quarter.

In Vancouver, Shareef Abdur-Rahim scored 22 points and rookie Mike Bibby scored 20 and handed out 10 assists as the Grizzlies kept the Denver Nuggets winless away from home with a 101-87 victory.

Nick Van Exel collected 29 points and 11 assists to lead the Nuggets, who were outscored 55-39 in the second half to fall to 0-15 on the road this season.

Christie content to watch sprinters from the stands

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Sprint legend Linford Christie's 2000 Olympics campaign will be restricted to coaching others, but as he starts celebrating his 39th birthday this week he still rates himself a strong chance of winning this weekend's Stawell Easter Gift.

The former Olympic and world 100 metre champion will start off a 1.25 metres handicap and is rated a 10-1 bet for the 120m race, which has attracted a strong international field.

The 121st Gift, traditionally held over Easter, also features one of Christie's pupils, European 100m champion Darren Campbell, and Australian 100m and 200m champion Matt Shrivington, who are both off scratch.

Despite the strength of the field and his age, Christie said Wednesday he was fit and was after the A\$31,000 (\$19,500) first prize.

"I don't gamble but I think the prize money is pretty good and I think my rivals should worry about me," said Christie.

"I'm cool, I've been training, I'm okay."

Welsh world indoor 400m champion Darren Baulch is another Christie-trained sprinter running at Stawell, in country Victoria, though in another handicap 400m race.

Other internationals in the field include American Greg Sadtler, last year's runner-up to Victorian winner Dale Seers, who will join Christie off 1.25m.

300 gold medals at Sydney Games

SYDNEY (AFP) — There will be 300 medal events at the 2000 Olympics after the Sydney organising committee gained approval to add synchronised diving to the programme, it was announced Wednesday.

SOCOG sports commission head John Coates said the inclusion of synchronised diving for the first time was an initiative of world swimming's governing body FINA.

Thirty-five new events have been added since the Atlanta Games, including the new sports of taekwondo and triathlon. SOCOG estimates there will be 10,321 athletes competing in Sydney, down from 10,744 in Atlanta because of tougher qualifying standards.

Thirty-eight per cent of competitors will be women, up from 34 per cent at the previous Games. Athletics will be the biggest sport with about 2,000 competitors, followed by swimming with 744 and rowing with 550. Two hundred countries are expected to be represented at the 2000 Games, three more than in 1996.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

'Matthaeus would be perfect coach'

BONN (R) — Bayern Munich's veteran libero Lothar Matthaeus would be a perfect successor to Germany head coach Erich Ribbeck. Franz Beckenbauer was quoted as saying on Wednesday. "Lothar is predestined to become head coach," Beckenbauer told weekly sport Bild. "He knows how to read the game, analyse it and rate it." Ribbeck, who was appointed after Berti Vogts stepped down last September, has a contract running until Euro 2000. Matthaeus, 38, was to celebrate his 134th cap for Germany in an European Championship qualifier against Finland later on Wednesday. Beckenbauer is both the Bayern Munich president and a vice-president of the German Soccer Federation (DFB).

Stojkovic to continue NATO protest

TOKYO (AFP) — Dragan Stojkovic, captain of Yugoslavia's 1998 World Cup team, on Wednesday vowed to continue his protest against NATO air strikes against his homeland. "I'd like to wear a mourning badge on my chest in memory of the air raid victims," said the Nagoya Grandpurs Eight striker, before his club's match against Sanfrecce Hiroshima on Saturday. Stojkovic, one of the five Yugoslav players in the Japanese league, was warned on Wednesday by Nagoya executives to follow a J-League order and stop sending political messages from the playing field. The 34-year-old on Saturday took off his jersey and flashed an undershirt bearing the English-language message "NATO stop strikes" after setting up a goal to power Nagoya to a 2-0 win over Vissel Kobe. J-League chairman Saburo Kawabuchi called on all 26 clubs in the first and second divisions to prevent their players from bringing politics into sports.

CAF gives Nigeria deadline

LAGOS (AFP) — The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has given Nigeria a deadline of April 10 to decide whether it will co-host the 2000 African Nations Cup with Ghana. CAF offered Nigeria and Ghana co-hosting rights for the competition which was taken from Zimbabwe after it failed to meet stadium and financial targets. Reports earlier this month said the Nigerian government was unhappy that the offer was only to co-host the contest and was considering rejecting the proposal. The NFA told AFP however no decision had been made. Nigeria has recently spent \$110 million on upgrading its stadium ahead of the FIFA World Youth Championship which opens here Saturday and runs to April 24.

Shaq fined NBA scuffles

NEW YORK (AFP) — Los Angeles Lakers center Shaquille O'Neal was fined \$3,500 and three others also received paycheck punishments for their roles in late-game scuffles Sunday in the NBA game between the Lakers and New York Knicks. O'Neal shoved New York's Chris Dudley with 6:13 remaining in the fourth quarter of the game at Los Angeles. Dudley was fined \$2,500 for throwing the basketball at O'Neal in retaliation. New York's Kurt Thomas received the stiffest fine, \$5,000, for throwing Dennis Rodman to the floor with 2.4 seconds to play in the third quarter. Rick Fox of the Lakers was fined \$2,000 for retaliating against Thomas.

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A - 1NT. You have a balanced hand with 10 high cards and 10 low cards. You have a good chance of making 1NT.

Q2 - North vulnerable, as South you bid 1NT. What do you bid next?

A - 1NT. You have a balanced hand with 10 high cards and 10 low cards. You have a good chance of making 1NT.

Q3 - As South, vulnerable, you bid 1NT. What do you bid next?

A - 1NT. You have a balanced hand with 10 high cards and 10 low cards. You have a good chance of making 1NT.

Q4 - As South, vulnerable, you bid 1NT. What do you bid next?

A - 1NT. You have a balanced hand with 10 high cards and 10 low cards. You have a good chance of making 1NT.

Q5 - As South, vulnerable, you bid 1NT. What do you bid next?

A - 1NT. You have a balanced hand with 10 high cards and 10 low cards. You have a good chance of making 1NT.

Q6 - As South, vulnerable, you bid 1NT. What do you bid next?

A - 1NT. You have a balanced hand with 10 high cards and 10 low cards. You have a good chance of making 1NT.

Q7 - As South, vulnerable, you bid 1NT. What do you bid next?

A - 1NT. You have a balanced hand with 10 high cards and 10 low cards. You have a good chance of making 1NT.

Q8 - As South, vulnerable, you bid 1NT. What do you bid next?

A - 1NT. You have a balanced hand with 10 high cards and 10 low cards. You have a good chance of making 1NT.

Q9 - As South, vulnerable, you bid 1NT. What do you bid next?

A - 1NT. You have a balanced hand with 10 high cards and 10 low cards. You have a good chance of making 1NT.

Q10 - As South, vulnerable, you bid 1NT. What do you bid next?

A - 1NT. You have a balanced hand with 10 high cards and 10 low cards. You have a good chance of making 1NT.

NBA RESULTS

Detroit	93	Atlanta	77
Boston	109	Charlotte	99
Toronto	101	Cleveland	91
Orlando	100	New Jersey	98
Minnesota	98	Dallas	78
New York	94	Indiana	93
Chicago	91	Philadelphia	81
Milwaukee	107	Washington	105
San Antonio	95	Seattle	87
Vancouver	101	Denver	87
Golden State	93	Portland	90
Houston	104	LA Clippers	95
Sacramento	104	Utah	101 (OT)

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Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Juventus to demolish \$100 million stadium

TURIN (AFP) — Juventus have unveiled plans for a new \$220 million stadium complex that will mean knocking down the \$100 million Delle Alpi ground built 50 metres away for the 1990 World Cup.

In a country where football grounds are owned by local councils, Juventus want to follow the British tradition of building and owning their own stadium, albeit alongside a new hotel, multi-screen cinema and restaurants.

The project has been put to Turin City Council, along with the ultimatum that if the Serie A giants do not get planning permission soon, they will leave their current ground in the summer of 2000.

The unloved Delle Alpi has been an expensive flop, dubbed "The Monument to Waste" by the Italian press.

Along with the building cost, which was triple the original estimate, its annual running expenses of \$1.75 million and unused athletics track, have made it unpopular with officials and soccer fans alike.

And if Juventus have their way, it will be knocked down in 2001.

The club, backed by sponsors and business partners, have unveiled a three-phase project for a site covering more than 500,000 square metres, a project unprecedented in Italy.

Phase one is a training centre with nine soccer pitches, changing rooms, gym

facilities and a club headquarters. Work would start in January 2000, followed three months later by phase two — a new 40,000 seater ground just 50 metres from the Delle Alpi, to be ready for the 2001-2002 season.

Once the new stadium is finished, the Delle Alpi will be demolished and building work will begin on a new hotel-restaurant-shop complex, complete with Juve museum and store, and also including a 20-screen cinema.

The plan effectively supersedes a previous one to re-develop their old ground, the Stadio Comunale, now used by the champions for training.

More significantly, the plan risks leaving second division neighbours Torino homeless. Their original ground, the Filadelfia, has long been demolished and they currently use the Delle Alpi on alternate Sundays.

Juventus will not share their new stadium complex with the Serie B club who, backed with a campaign by Turin-based Tuttosport newspaper, are campaigning for a redevelopment of the Filadelfia.

The Zebras have said they want an answer from Turin council within three weeks about their project. Though the deadline is unrealistic for a local authority in Italy, a decision is expected within three months.

World swimming body announces new anti-doping rules

HONG KONG (AFP) — World swimming body FINA on Wednesday announced new rules to combat illegal drug taking in sport, including publishing a list of banned substances for the first time.

As part of the new doping control rules, the International Swimming Federation also announced the setting up of a Doping Control Review Board to advise on drug cases.

"We are trying to find the best way to fight against cheaters," FINA president Mustapha Larfaoui told reporters after adopting the rules during an extraordinary congress ahead of the world short course championships here.

"But we are never finished with this...I am not optimistic enough to think we can stamp out doping but we will do our best to control it," he said.

The new rules contain two detailed lists of banned substances.

One list outlines those drugs which are banned during competition, while the second lists substances that are off limits to swimmers at all times.

Cannabis is included as a banned drug for competing athletes, but is not on the second list.

"It is not a substance like steroids which allow an athlete to become bigger and better over time and that is why it is banned in competition and not out," said FINA Vice President and legal adviser Ross Wales.

Commenting on the new regulations, Wales said he hoped there was less room for confusion and interpretation.

"Hopefully we are finding more clear ways to express ourselves so there is less confusion when the lawyers become involved," he said.

Wales also said FINA may in the future consider introducing sanctions against national swimming federations who fail to report the results of in-country doping tests to the organisation.

"While we re-wrote many of our rules they were very small steps and this is one of the areas where we need to make another small step," he said.

Mauresmo tumbles while Coetzer advances at WTA event

HILTON HEAD (AFP) — France's Amelie Mauresmo became the first top seed to fall at the WTA Family Circle Cup, being ousted 6-4, 0-6, 6-4, by compatriot Nathalie Dechy in a second-round match here Tuesday.

South Africa's Amanda Coetzer, seeded fifth, advanced to the third round by beating Russia's Elena Makarova 6-3, 7-5, while eighth seed Mauresmo was eliminated by 31st-ranked Dechy on a windy day.

"It's one of my biggest wins," Dechy said. "But in Paris I won against (Sandrine) Testud, who was good also, then (Iva) Majoli, so I had some good wins this year."

Dechy has played Mauresmo since the two were junior rivals and knew how to take advantage of early errors by the Australian Open standout.

"I started the match I was aggressive. So she couldn't find her rhythm, her timing and everything. But I play my game," Dechy said. "I practised with her two days ago, and I knew that



Amelie Mauresmo

she could make some mistake during one set and then play a lot better at the other set. So that's what she did."

She explained the second-set wipeout as a 20-minute rest.

"I was taking a break. I don't know. I didn't move so well in the second set, and she didn't - the mis-

takes she made in the first set, she didn't make any mistake in the second set. In the second set she didn't miss anything and it was very tough to play her."

Asked about Mauresmo's going public with her homosexuality, Dechy said the revelation changed nothing and they remain friendly rivals.

"I think it's her private life. She does what she has to do with this. She found a balance with that and she's good like that, and we don't have to care about her private life."

She's doing what she wants to do, and the French public has been very approving for her during the tournament in Paris. It's good."

Half-a-Keegan better than no Keegan decide FA bosses

LONDON (AFP) — Football Association chiefs have given the first indication that they may be prepared to let Kevin Keegan carry on coaching England on a part-time basis after his current contract expires.

Fulham manager Keegan has a four-match, part-time contract with the FA to look after the national team until the summer of 2000, but one solution is for him to combine both jobs next season.

Sources at the FA have revealed they will consider allowing Keegan to continue on a part-time basis if he wants to carry on that way.

"If in June of next year the relationship between Kevin and our Technical Director Howard Wilkinson and his team is going well, and England are in Euro 2000 and in a strong position, then we would be stupid not to

ly encouraged by what they have seen so far from Keegan after just one match in charge.

He has already achieved emphatically the FA's first priority, which was to raise the morale of everyone who cared about the England team.

His contract as Chief Operating Officer at Craven Cottage expires in June 2000, but one solution is for him to combine both jobs next season.

Sources at the FA have revealed they will consider allowing Keegan to continue on a part-time basis if he wants to carry on that way.

"If in June of next year the relationship between Kevin and our Technical Director Howard Wilkinson and his team is going well, and England are in Euro 2000 and in a strong position, then we would be stupid not to

consider such a request," said one FA insider.

Both Keegan and the FA have agreed that now is not the time to discuss the issue of who will lead England beyond qualification for the 2000 European Championship. In the meantime they shall remain in constant touch and monitor the success of the current working arrangement.

Keegan's determination to stand down in June appears to be softening, and victories by England in their next three matches could persuade him to stay on as coach of the national side, according to acting FA Chairman Geoff Thompson.

Thompson said: "Perhaps after he has been successful in his next matches he and the country will feel he is the right man for the job and that he is the right man to lead us into the European Championships in the

Low Countries next year."

Talks about Keegan's future may take place before England's next match, the friendly against Hungary on April 28, and Thompson added: "I have no doubt that they will sit down and discuss the matter."

But Fulham captain Chris Coleman fears Keegan will succumb to the temptation of taking the England job on a full-time basis.

Wales defender Coleman said: "Fulham's players are starting to fear the worst. There has to be doubt in our minds about the future after Mr. Al Fayed's comments that he might be prepared to release Kevin and the fact that England got off to a blistering start under Kevin."



Brazilian forward Amoroso (C, #7) scores a goal while Japanese goalie (L) extends his hand during the first half of the international football match between Brazil and Japan in Tokyo. Amoroso scored the goal to give Brazil a 1-0 lead at half-time. Brazil won 2-0 (AFP photo)



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Iraq blasts NATO strikes amid reports of deal with Belgrade

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq condemned deadly NATO air strikes on Yugoslavia on Wednesday as Britain's chief of staff said the alliance had identified military links between the two nations.

Abdul Ghani Abdul Ghafor, a member of the ruling Baath Party's leadership, told Baghdad's newspapers that the strikes in Yugoslavia were "proof that the United States was carrying out a plot against free countries."

"Yugoslavia's firmness against the American strikes shows that Iraq's resistance... has been fruitful and was an example for the world's countries and peoples to defend their sovereignty and territorial integrity," he said.

He dismissed U.S. suggestions that the strikes were defending Muslims in Kosovo and said such "claims... only provoke derision."

NATO vowed on Tuesday to pursue air strikes against Yugoslavia, rejecting a Russian-brokered proposal to end its campaign which had failed to budge Belgrade enough to satisfy alliance

leaders.

Meanwhile, British Chief of Staff Sir Charles Guthrie told a London press conference that Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein have been cooperating extensively on military matters.

"Serbia is now a key military ally for Iraq, eager to try and help meet all Iraq's key military procurement and technical priorities, helping to replace equipment damaged or destroyed during Operation Desert Fox," the air campaign against Iraq launched in December, he said.

He said there had been a "continuous two-way flow of military and defence industry delegations" between Serbia and Iraq in the past few months.

Earlier in March, a Serbian delegation toured Iraqi air defence sites, presumably to discuss tactics for combating allied aircraft involved in bombing raids against Iraq and Yugoslavia, he said.

"We have seen some of these Iraqi tactics put into practice already over

Serbia," since NATO air strikes against Yugoslav targets began a week ago, he said.

The Pentagon on Monday said Yugoslavia and Iraq might look for ways to cooperate militarily in the face of air attacks by U.S. and allied warplanes since both countries have similar Soviet-style air defences.

London's Sunday Telegraph reported that Yugoslavia had agreed to help Iraq rebuild its air forces, particularly its air defences, in return for Iraqi help in withstanding allied air assaults.

Meanwhile the Iraqi information ministry's weekly Alif Ba newspaper urged Russia to break the U.N. embargo on Iraq as punishment for the strikes.

"It is a good moment for the Russian leadership to strike a harsh blow against the American administration by lifting the embargo on Iraq, in response to the U.S.-NATO strikes on Yugoslavia," the newspaper said.

"NATO is convinced that Russia will not respond with

force to its aggression, and that all it can do is to break its relations with NATO and provide arms to Yugoslavia," Alif Ba said.

"Since America and NATO did not consult the U.N. Security Council before striking Yugoslavia, it is Russia's right to take a unilateral decision," by lifting the embargo imposed on Iraq following its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Iraq was among the first to condemn the NATO strikes, saying the organisation was being used as a "tool" of the United States. U.S.-led warplanes carried out a four-day air campaign against Iraq in mid-December.

The United States and Britain have since carried out almost daily strikes in "no-fly" zones of northern and southern Iraq, as Baghdad challenges their overflights of its territory.

But a lull in the attacks has taken hold since March 19, coinciding with the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. Neither Iraq nor the United States has given an explanation for the halt in the bombings.



EASTER IN SPAIN: A hooded penitent walks past a window of Seville's bullring while marching downtown in a traditional Holy Week procession on Wednesday. The Andalusian capital typically hosts numerous Easter celebrations (Reuters photo)

Iraq needs foreign oil investments, U.N. says

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Iraq, since the 1991 Gulf War, has slipped from "relative affluence to massive poverty" and should be allowed to receive foreign oil investments, a report released on Tuesday said.

The report to the Security Council from a four-member panel of senior U.N. officials, says that even if stringent U.N. sanctions were lifted "it will take a long time before the infrastructure is repaired and the economy recovers."

The panel said Iraq should be allowed to export as much oil as it can to finance needed goods under the U.N. "oil-for-food" programme but it did not directly call for lifting stringent U.N. sanctions, imposed after Baghdad invaded Kuwait in 1990.

Nevertheless its proposals included an easing of some sanctions, such as allowing foreign oil companies and others to invest in such Iraqi exports as fertiliser, sulphur, urea, dates, nuts and agriculture in general.

The report also said the oil firms could share with Iraq spare parts it needs to upgrade its dilapidated oil equipment.

The United States and others have proposed lifting the ceiling on oil sales, now at \$5.25 billion every six months to finance humanitarian supplies

under the oil-for-food programme. But low oil prices have prevented Iraq from even reaching the current ceiling.

Diplomats said the United States and Britain would probably object to investments from oil companies and other industries into Iraq's domestic economy, even if such ventures were supervised by the United Nations.

While the panel said Iraq was responsible for some of the problems in distributing supplies, particularly medicine, it made clear that the U.N. oil-for-food programme was inadequate, particularly during periods of falling oil prices.

"The humanitarian situation in Iraq will continue to be a dire one in the absence of a sustained revival of the Iraqi economy, which in turn cannot be achieved through remedial humanitarian efforts," the report said.

The panel was one of three set up by the council, all headed by Celso Amorim, Brazil's U.N. ambassador, in an effort to find a basis for its policies on Iraq, stymied since mid-December bombing raids by the United States and Britain.

One panel looked into the fate of 605 Kuwaiti and other prisoners during Iraq's occupation of Kuwait after it invaded the emirate in August 1990.

It concluded Iraq had not given adequate explanations about prisoners or property it looted.

The most controversial was an arms panel that reported in opaque language on Monday and said intrusive inspections under a monitoring programme needed to resume in Iraq. It also called for a "renovated" or restructured U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM), now responsible for Iraq's weapons of destruction.

The humanitarian panel concluded that Iraq since 1990 has "experienced a shift from relative affluence to massive poverty." Infant mortality is the highest in the world, and chronic malnutrition affects every fourth child under five.

Only 41 per cent of the population has regular access to clean water and 83 per cent of all schools need substantial repairs. The U.N. Development Programme calculates it would take \$7 billion to rehabilitate the power sector to its 1990 capacity, the report said.

Other recommendations included temporarily reducing the 30 per cent Iraq has to pay from its oil revenues into a fund for Kuwaiti Gulf War victims by asking governments and institutions to delay their claims.

Magic smugglers curse Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait customs officials are being overwhelmed by increasing amounts of witchcraft and black magic paraphernalia entering the emirate, a newspaper said Wednesday. Customs officials are facing an onslaught of "charms", such as amulets, precious stones, string and paper scrolls with strange inscriptions. Al Anba said. "Witchcraft and black magic smuggling is a new phenomenon in Kuwait," said Suleiman Al Fahad, customs chief at Kuwait's airport. He said that books on sorcery and tools such as stones and animal parts including hair and teeth had also been seized, adding that the smugglers were not only the "poor and illiterate."

Bird ruins model's roller coaster ride

WILLIAMSBURG (AP) — Busch Gardens named Fabio's ride on a new roller coaster called Apollo's chariot as "Modern-Day Adams vs. Ancient-Day Sun God." But a bird upstaged the supermodel and the ride. The animal hit Fabio on the nose and cut him, sending blood streaking down his chin and cheeks. Several women sitting near him in white tunics, portraying goddesses, were splattered with blood. Fabio was treated for a one-inch cut on the bridge of his nose and released from a hospital. "He's fine, no serious injuries," park spokeswoman Deborah L. Demarco said. "I don't know about the bird's plight."

Time enough for 'please'

NEW YORK (AP) — New York's subway conductors will be allowed to keep saying the magic word. The city transit agency decided Tuesday that it doesn't take too long, after all, to say "please" before asking riders to stand clear of the closing doors. Earlier this week, the agency said conductors could help speed train service, and save five seconds at every stop, by dropping the word "please." But the idea didn't sit well with riders and commuter advocates who insisted there is always enough time to be polite. Transit officials were forced to quickly admit that the idea was silly.

Fewer commercials on Japanese TV

TOKYO (AP) — TV viewers in the city of Shizuoka struck it lucky. The station there admits that it neglected to run thousands of ads over the past three years. Japanese newspapers reported Wednesday. An internal investigation at Shizuoka Daiichi Television Corp. found that the broadcaster failed to air 3,702 paid commercials since April 1996, the Asahi Shimbun reported. No one noticed, including the 130 clients who had booked the ads, until someone sent an anonymous letter tipping off the station's biggest advertisers, the Yomiuri Shimbun reported. There was no indication of whether station employees were greedy or forgetful.

NYC mayor opens anti-Hillary Web site

ALBANY (AP) — New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani has a message for Hillary Rodham Clinton, and his Web site address says it all: "hillary.no.com." The Republican mayor and the first lady might face each other in a race for the Senate seat being vacated next year by Democrat Daniel Patrick Moynihan. The Web site went on-line during the weekend. Giuliani said that on Tuesday alone, the site had generated 1,100 volunteers. "The last Web site that was as active was the Victoria's Secret Web site," the mayor said. The Friends of Giuliani site opens to a photo of a smiling first lady with her thumbs up and the message: "U.S. Senate. For proven leaders, not a proving ground."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel permits pacifist demo in Hebron

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel's army has issued a rare permit for a protest demonstration by Israeli peace activists in the West Bank city of Hebron, where zealous Jewish settlers are a constant source of tension with the city's Palestinian majority. Peace Now, a movement opposed to Jewish settlement of the occupied territories, said it had been authorised by the army to hold a demonstration on April 9 outside the Tomb of the Patriarchs, a holy site known to Muslims as the Ibrahimi Mosque. The mosque was the scene of a 1994 massacre in which a Jewish settler opened fire on Muslim worshippers, killing 29 Palestinians. The Israeli activists want to protest against a decision by Israel's right-wing government to install new mobile homes in one of the Jewish enclaves located in the centre of Hebron, a city of 150,000 Palestinians.

Netanyahu relative backs Palestinian state

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's own brother-in-law came out Wednesday in favour of Palestinian statehood, an opinion fiercely opposed by the right-wing head of government. Matania Ben Artzi, a mathematician, was one of 530 intellectuals and peace activists who signed a petition published on Wednesday calling on Israel to permit the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Ben Artzi is one of two brothers to Netanyahu's wife Sarah. The other, Hagai Ben Artzi, is a far-right militant who has harshly criticised the prime minister for signing even timid land-for-security accords with the Palestinians.

Israeli warplanes raid southern Lebanon

TYRE (AFP) — Israeli warplanes on Wednesday bombed strongholds of the Shiite Muslim Hizbollah militia in the Israeli-occupied security zone in southern Lebanon, police said. Two Israeli jets fired two missiles on the zone following Israeli mortar attacks near the villages of Zibkin and Jabal Al Botom, they said without giving word on casualties or damage. The strikes followed an earlier attack on an Israeli position in the zone that was claimed by Hizbollah.

'Algeria kills 40 rebels in heavy shelling'

ALGIERS (R) — Algerian government troops killed 40 Islamists this week in a campaign against guerrillas who staged this year's deadliest attack against the army, a local daily said on Wednesday. "The bodies of many terrorists have been torn apart beyond recognition by the heavy shelling," the French-language daily La Tribune said, using the official term to describe radical Islamists fighting the largely secular government. The army had not commented on its two-week-old campaign against rebel hideouts in Bouira, about 90 km east of Algiers, where 16 soldiers were killed and 22 injured in an ambush in early March. Algerian newspapers said elite troops backed by helicopter gunships and artillery attacked targets in the thick forests of Bouira where the rebels from Algeria's most radical faction, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), were hiding.

400 Turkish Islamists arrested

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish security forces have arrested some 400 people in a month-long sweep against an Islamist organisation operating in the southeastern provinces, the Anatolia news agency reported Wednesday. More than 1,000 policemen took part in some 250 raids against the Scientists' group, a sub-organisation of the ultra-fundamentalist Hizbollah, in Diyarbakir, Mardin and Batman provinces. Diyarbakir police chief Gaffar Okkan said. Authorities said the Scientists' aimed to establish a "Kurdish-Islamic state" on Turkish soil and were cooperating with the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK). Okkan said documents found in the raid showed that the organisation had at least 20,000 members. "Hizbollah is the greatest threat to the country after the PKK," he said.

Kurdish group claims it foiled PKK attack

DUBAI (AFP) — An Iraqi Kurdish group claimed on Wednesday it had foiled a massive explosives attack by a Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) operative in the north of Iraq 10 days ago. In a statement received here, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) said it had arrested a PKK member carrying "a large quantity of TNT," on March 21, the eve of the Kurdish new year. The statement said the Syrian national's aim was to "transform the celebrations in Iraqi Kurdistan into a bloodbath" by laying explosives and mines in the area. It said the man had admitted being sent by the PKK, which is fighting for a Kurdish homeland in southeastern Turkey. The KDP also said the PKK had detonated a bomb on March 10 in the Iraqi town of Dohuk in front of a Turkmenistan party's office. The United Nations confirmed the story and said the unidentified man carrying the bomb was killed in the attack and four people were slightly injured.

Lebanon premier denies rumours of cabinet reshuffle

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss angrily denied rumours that his four-month-old government was headed for a reshuffle ahead of a crucial cabinet meeting Wednesday on the nation's shaky finances.

"We do not see any such action," Hoss told the independent Al Nahar newspaper, trying to quash widespread speculation that Finance Minister Georges Corm will step down and spark a broader shakeup in the administration.

The paper reported that Hoss and President Emile Lahoud met on Tuesday to discuss their "anger and astonishment" at the rumours, which the prime minister said were being spread by ousted government officials keen to return to power.

Meanwhile, the Daily Star reported that Hoss said freedoms introduced by his administration had allowed "the opposition to criticise us so strongly that some opponents don't hesitate to slander us."

But the denials have not stopped the swirl of rumours, which Al Nahar said would become reality after the approval of the government's 1999 budget.

"Despite the energetic denials of Hoss, reports from those close to the government say there will be a reshuffle soon," respected Al Nahar columnist Sarkis Nawar said.

The resignation of Corm, "who has more than once threatened to step down because of opposition cam-

paigns as well as differences with other ministers on economic and financial questions, would lead to a reshuffle," he said.

"But everyone believes it will not happen until after the budget is approved," he said.

The Al Nahar paper said Saturday that Corm is determined to give up his post following snafus with Economy Minister Nasser Saidi over new taxes aimed at refilling the nation's coffers.

Sources close to Corm said the finance minister "has not ruled out any possibility but would be inclined to resign after the budget is passed," probably in June.

Corm, Hoss and Lahoud have repeatedly put the blame for the nation's empty treasury on the administration of the previous prime minister, billionaire entrepreneur Rafik Hariri.

A number of Hariri associates have been ousted from top public sector positions since Hoss took office in December, and Hariri's former oil minister is currently the target of an investigation into the embezzlement of millions of dollars by public officials.

"All the studies... have concluded that the current crisis can be overcome, provided there is general cooperation among all to remedy a problem which this government has inherited and which is caused by the size of the public debt and overspending by previous governments," Lahoud said last week.

Court cuts damages in 'McLibel' case

LONDON (R) — Fast food giant McDonald's and two penniless environmental activists both claimed victory on Wednesday when a court reduced damages in the so-called McLibel trial.

A three-judge panel of the high court cut the damages that were awarded to McDonald's at the end of England's longest trial in 1997 to 40,000 pounds (\$64,000) from 60,000 pounds (\$96,500). The activists had appealed against the damages, which were awarded because of allegations they made in a leaflet about McDonald's treatment of its employees and the standard of its food safety.

In Wednesday's decision, the judges said it was a fair comment to say McDonald's employees worldwide do badly in terms of pay and conditions.

"More significantly, we have concluded that the allegation in the leaflet about a 'very real risk' of heart disease from a diet affected by eating McDonald's food was justified," the judges said.

Activists Helen Steel, 33, and

David Morris, 44, who had conducted their own defence in the 314-day original trial, said they would continue their fight to overturn the original verdict and against McDonald's practices.

"Campaigners around the world have now the backing of the [English] courts in their opposition to McDonald's," Steel told reporters after three judges handed down the judgement in an oak-panelled courtroom.

"We intend to take this to the House of Lords and the European Court of Justice if necessary," she said.

Morris and Steel, dressed in jeans and coats, arrived at the court to cheers from about 20 supporters, many carrying placards that said "McMurder" and "McProfits."

McDonald's said it welcomed the judges' decision to uphold the 1997 verdict that other allegations over the company's environmental record and food safety were defamatory.

In the pamphlet, the activists

said McDonald's was responsible for starvation in the Third World and rain forest destruction. It said McDonald's food was a poison and cancer risk, and that the company dismissed pro-union workers.

The 1997 ruling said the allegations injured the company's reputation. "McDonald's has always stressed the importance of a balanced diet and lifestyle when considering questions of nutrition," it said in a statement issued after Wednesday's verdict.

The appeal judges upheld the previous trial's ruling that other allegations against McDonald's were justified, including that its advertising exploited children, it was responsible for cruelty to some animals and pretended its food had a positive nutritional benefit.

The "McDonald's Two" said the fast food group had brought the case to stop distribution of the pamphlet — "What's wrong with McDonald's" — even though it was now available to millions via the Internet.

Arafat's adviser resigns, runs for Israeli parliament

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — A top adviser to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat resigned Tuesday and said he would run for a seat in the Israeli parliament.

Ahmad Tibi, who holds Israeli citizenship and speaks fluent Hebrew, joined an Israeli Arab party whose leader is the first Arab to run for prime minister.

"As of today I am a representative of the Balad Party and cease to be the adviser of Chairman Yasser Arafat. I informed him of my resignation today," Tibi told Israel Radio, adding that it had been accepted.

His candidacy is likely to draw sharp reactions from far right-wing Israelis who oppose current peace agreements with the Palestinians. When Balad Party leader

Azmi Bishara first hinted he would run for prime minister, several lawmakers tried unsuccessfully to pass a law banning non-Jews from holding the country's highest office.

Right-wing Israelis have attacked Tibi bitterly for serving Arafat, accusing him of disloyalty to Israel, a charge which he dismissed.

"I am proud to have served. Now I am turning over a new leaf," he said.

In the 1996 elections, Tibi's name was used in negative campaign slogans by the right-wing, suggesting that he was hooked-in with dovish parties who would put more power in the hands of Arafat.

Bishara said Tuesday that he and Tibi were offering a new kind of leadership to the Israeli Arab minority.